



## **What To Do if You Have Monkeypox**

This document provides information about what to do if you have monkeypox, and how to take care of yourself and reduce the risk of spreading the virus to others.

### **How Monkeypox Spreads**

Monkeypox is most often spread through direct contact with the rash or sores of someone who has the virus. It can also spread through contact with clothing, bedding or other items used by a person with monkeypox, or from respiratory droplets that can be passed through prolonged face-to-face contact. The virus can spread through the rash and sores until all the scabs that form on the sores have fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed.

Monkeypox virus has been found in saliva, semen, urine and feces (poop), and it is possible it may also be spread by these fluids. If the virus can spread in this way, people may be contagious for some period of time even after their symptoms end.

### **Getting Tested for Monkeypox**

A health care provider will swab your sores to test for the monkeypox virus. While you are waiting for your test result, do not have sex or other intimate activity, avoid all other physical contact with others as much as possible, and follow the additional guidance in this document. If the test result is positive, continue to follow this guidance.

### **When To Isolate While You Have Monkeypox**

If your symptoms include fever, chills or respiratory symptoms (such as cough, sneezing, runny nose and sore throat), it is important to isolate at home and avoid contact with others, including household members, until these symptoms go away without taking any fever-reducing or other medicines. Avoid having nonessential visitors in your home. If you cannot stay in a separate room from others at home, or you need to leave home for food, medical care, exercise or other essential needs, it is especially important to follow the precautions on the next page.

If you do not have a fever, chills or respiratory symptoms and you can follow the precautions on the next page, including wearing a well-fitting face mask and fully covering your rashes and sores with clothing or bandages when you are around others or outside the home, you do not need to isolate.

**If you have monkeypox symptoms, you may be required to stay out of work until your sores have healed. Talk to your employer.**

## **Precautions to Always Take While You Have Monkeypox**

If you have monkeypox, follow these precautions **until all the sores have healed and a new layer of skin has formed**. This can take two to four weeks from when the rash or sores first appear.

- Do not have oral, anal or vaginal sex or other intimate physical contact with others, such as rimming, hugging, kissing, biting, cuddling or massage.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after direct contact with the rash or sores.
- If you do not have a fever, chills or respiratory symptoms, you can be around others at home and may leave home if you can follow these precautions:
  - Fully cover your rash and sores with clothing (including gloves if you have sores on your hands); cover the rash and sores that cannot be covered by clothing, such as those on the face, with bandages.
  - Wear a well-fitting face mask. Sit at least 6 feet away from others if eating or drinking without a mask.
  - Avoid physical contact with others and crowded spaces. If using public transportation such as subways and buses, avoid physical contact with others as much as possible.
  - When using a public or shared bathroom, wipe the toilet seat after use with a disinfectant wipe.
  - Do not share or let others touch your clothing, towels or bedding.
  - Do not share a bed.
  - Do not share dishes, food, drinks or utensils.
- Avoid snuggling or kissing dogs or cats, and do not let them have direct contact with your sores or your garbage, clothes, bedding or other materials. Avoid all contact with pet rodents (such as mice, rats, guinea pigs and hamsters) or rabbits.

Even after stopping other precautions, you should use a latex condom during sex for another eight weeks. This will help protect your partners in case the virus can be transmitted by semen.

## **How To Clean and Safely Wash Your Laundry if You Have Monkeypox**

Follow these guidelines for cleaning and laundry:

- Wear disposable gloves if you need to clean or touch your rash or sores. Throw out the gloves after using them and wash your hands.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer after touching clothing, linens or any surface that may have had contact with the rash or sores or fluid from the sores.
- If sharing a bathroom, clean and disinfect surfaces (for example, counters, toilet seats and faucets) after use, especially if the rash or sores are exposed (for example, showering, going to the bathroom or changing bandages covering the sores).
- Use standard household cleaners and disinfectants to clean and disinfect surfaces.

- Wash dirty dishes and utensils with warm water and soap or in a dishwasher.
- Place medical waste (such as gauze and bandages) in a tight waterproof plastic bag (double bagged, if possible) and throw out with regular trash.
- Place used linens, towels and clothes in a separate laundry bag or garbage bag. For additional, detailed guidance, visit [nyc.gov/monkeypox](https://www.nyc.gov/monkeypox) and search for **How to Safely Wash Your Laundry if You Have Monkeypox**.

### **Care and Treatment for Monkeypox**

The type of medicine and care you need depends on the type of symptoms you have, how much pain you are in, and where the rash and sores are on your body. People who have HIV or other conditions that weaken their immune system, are pregnant, or have a history of certain skin conditions may be at increased risk for severe disease, making it especially important to monitor symptoms and seek care.

There is no specific treatment approved for monkeypox. However, an antiviral called tecovirimat (TPOXX), approved to treat smallpox, can be used for people who are at high risk for severe illness or have severe symptoms from monkeypox. Ask your provider about TPOXX — they can learn more about accessing TPOXX by visiting [nyc.gov/monkeypox](https://www.nyc.gov/monkeypox), clicking on **Monkeypox Providers** in the top menu bar, then reading the text under the heading Antiviral Treatment. Your provider may also be able to prescribe mouthwash, gels and other medicines to help reduce pain, swelling and itchiness, and give advice about over-the-counter symptom relief.

Severe illness due to monkeypox may include a fever, rapid increase in the number of sores, confusion, stiff neck, difficulty breathing, seizure, diarrhea and vomiting. Contact your provider if your symptoms get worse, including increases in pain, redness or swelling; if you have cloudy or milky fluid at the site of the sores; or if your pain interferes with eating, sitting or going to the bathroom. If you do not have a provider, call New York City (NYC) Health + Hospitals ExpressCare at 631-EXP-Care (631-397-2273) or visit [expresscare.nyc](https://www.expresscare.nyc). Care is available in NYC regardless of immigration status, insurance or ability to pay. If it is an emergency, call **911** or go to the hospital.

### **Reducing Symptoms**

The following list provides ways to take care of yourself and help reduce symptoms using medicines and remedies that do not require a prescription. Ask your provider or pharmacist for assistance choosing over-the-counter medicines. Read and closely follow any instructions on the medicine box and package insert, including about dose, frequency of use, who should not take or use the medicine, and allergies.

- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and other fluids, especially if you have diarrhea.
- Keep rash and sores clean and dry when not showering or bathing to prevent the sores from becoming infected.

- To relieve pain and itching from rash and sores:
  - Medicines such as ibuprofen (such as Advil and Motrin), naproxen (such as Aleve) and acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) can help reduce pain, swelling and fever. It is important to keep to the recommended dosage and interval per medicine.
  - Antihistamines (such as Benadryl), calamine lotion, petroleum jelly and cooling lotions (such as menthol and camphor lotions) can provide temporary itch relief.
  - Warm **oatmeal baths** can reduce itching and pain.
- If you have mouth sores:
  - Rinse your mouth with clean salt water at least four times per day to keep mouth sores clean; a mouthwash with no alcohol (such as Listerine Zero Alcohol) can also be used.
  - Suck on ice chips or ice pops and drink water to stay hydrated.
  - Consider using patches (such as Dentemp Canker Cover) that cover the sores and benzocaine gels to reduce mouth pain, especially to help you eat and drink.
- If you have sores in or around your anus or rectum or on your genitals:
  - Take warm **sitz baths** lasting at least 10 minutes several times each day.
  - Dibucaine ointment, often used for hemorrhoids, or lidocaine gel may also provide temporary relief. These are for external use only.
  - Take docusate (such as Colace), a stool softener, to reduce pain when you go to the bathroom.

### **Mental Health and Support Services**

Access NYC helps New Yorkers access benefits, such as cash or food, during an emergency. For more information, visit [access.nyc.gov](https://www.access.nyc.gov).

An infectious disease outbreak can be stressful for you, your loved ones and your friends. It is natural to feel overwhelmed, sad, anxious and afraid, or to experience other symptoms of distress, such as trouble sleeping. You can reduce your stress by anticipating these normal reactions and practicing stress-reducing activities. Staying positive, reminding yourself of your strengths and seeking help when symptoms of stress persist or become overwhelming can also help you cope.

To talk to trained counselors, contact NYC Well, a free and confidential mental health helpline for support. NYC Well staff are available 24/7 and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages: Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text “WELL” to 65173 or chat at [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://www.nyc.gov/nycwell). The NYC Well website also includes an App Library with apps and resources to help you manage your health and emotional well-being from home. If you are experiencing severe distress or have thoughts of harming yourself or someone else, call **911**.

For more information about monkeypox, visit [nyc.gov/monkeypox](https://www.nyc.gov/monkeypox) and [cdc.gov/monkeypox](https://www.cdc.gov/monkeypox).

**The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.** 9.7.22