

Basic Information about Monkeypox

What Is Monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a viral illness found mostly in the rainforest countries of central and West Africa. Although the disease is called “monkeypox” because it was first discovered in laboratory monkeys in 1958, it is more frequently seen in squirrels, rats, mice, and rabbits. In early June 2003, monkeypox was reported among several residents in the United States who became ill after having contact with sick pet prairie dogs.

This is the first time that there has been an outbreak of monkeypox in the United States.

What Are The Symptoms of Monkeypox?

Monkeypox in humans usually begins with fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, a general feeling of discomfort, and exhaustion. Within 1 to 3 days (sometimes longer) after onset of fever, the person develops a papular rash (i.e., raised bumps), often first on the face but sometimes initially on other parts of the body. The lesions usually develop through several stages before crusting and falling off. Unlike smallpox, which is more serious than monkey pox, monkeypox causes swollen lymph nodes. Monkeypox illness typically lasts for 2 to 4 weeks. It may take up to 12 days to become ill from the time a person is exposed to monkeypox.

Can You Die From Monkeypox?

In Africa, monkeypox has killed between 1% and 10% of people who get it. However, this risk is probably lower in the United States, where nutrition and access to medical care are better. To date, no one in the United States has died from monkeypox.

How Do You Get Monkeypox?

People can get monkeypox from an infected animal through a bite or by direct contact with the infected animal’s blood, body fluids, or lesions. People should not handle pets that appear to be ill, nor should they handle wildlife. Monkeypox may also be spread from person to person, but it is much less infectious than smallpox or chickenpox. Monkeypox can be spread by direct contact with body fluids of an infected person or with virus-contaminated objects, such as bedding or clothing. It may also be transmitted by large respiratory droplets during direct and prolonged face-to-face contact.

How Do You Treat Monkeypox?

Currently, there is no proven, safe treatment for monkeypox. Smallpox vaccine has been reported to reduce the risk of monkeypox among previously vaccinated persons in Africa. CDC is recommending that persons investigating monkeypox outbreaks and involved in caring for infected individuals or animals should receive a smallpox vaccination to protect against monkeypox. People who have had close or intimate contact with individuals or animals confirmed to have monkeypox should also be vaccinated. These people can be vaccinated up to 14 days after exposure. CDC is *not* recommending vaccination for unexposed veterinarians, veterinary staff, or animal control officers, unless such persons are involved in field investigations.

**For more information: 502-574-6677
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