

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a contagious infection caused by the monkeypox virus.

How Does monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox is a rare disease that can spread through close, in-person or physical contact including:

- Direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids
- Direct contact with respiratory secretions during prolonged face-to-face contact, or during intimate contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex
- Touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids of the infected individual
- Pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta

What are the signs and symptoms?

- The more telltale symptom is a rash that looks like pimples or blisters that appears on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body, like the hands, feet, chest, genitals, or anus
- Other symptoms that may or may not develop include: fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills, and exhaustion

How is it diagnosed?

- Monkeypox is diagnosed through a laboratory test
- Prior to being tested an individual must be evaluated by a healthcare provider
- If monkeypox is suspected, the healthcare provider must collect a specimen and send to a certified laboratory for confirmatory testing

How long are individuals contagious?

Individuals are contagious from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The rash goes through different stages before healing completely, the contagious period typically lasts 2-4 weeks.

Can monkeypox be treated?

- Antiviral medications exist to help manage monkeypox symptoms and may be appropriate for some people
- Individuals diagnosed with monkeypox must consult their healthcare provider to be prescribed antiviral medications
- Widespread vaccination against monkeypox is not recommended at this time but individuals who believe they need the vaccine should contact their healthcare provider

What is the risk of getting monkeypox?

At this time, the threat of monkeypox remains low and that while this is a rare viral disease, unlike COVID-19, it is not a new disease and testing, vaccine and antiviral treatments are already available

What do schools need to know or consider?

- Any individual with an unexplained and newly developed rash/lesions should be excluded from school and directed to seek care from a healthcare provider
- Any individual with a visible rash, or communicates about a rash, should be directed to the school nurse and sent home to seek care from a healthcare provider
- Any individual with a monkeypox diagnosis is strongly encouraged to isolate away from household members until all lesions are healed which can take 2-4 weeks
- The close contacts of an individual with monkeypox are not required to quarantine; they are provided guidance by the Chester County Health Department at the time of contact tracing on monitoring of signs and symptoms

Sources

Chester County Health Department Website: <https://www.chesco.org/5171/Monkeypox>

CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html>