



MONKEYPOX

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EPIDEMIOLOGY

Monkeypox is a rare disease that is caused by infection with monkeypox virus. It was first discovered in 1958 when outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in monkeys that were kept for research. The first human case was recorded in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in a 9-month-old boy, and since then the infection has been reported in numerous central and western African countries. Monkeypox often occurs in rural areas and in proximity to tropical rainforests, however recently it has been increasingly appearing in urban areas too. Most cases of monkeypox are reported from the DRC and Nigeria.



In 2003 [the first monkeypox outbreak outside of Africa](#) was in the United States and was linked to importation of rodents from Ghana. Some of the infected animals including dormice and rope squirrels were housed near prairie dogs at the facilities of an animal vendor. All people infected with monkeypox became ill after having contact with infected pet prairie dogs. No instances of monkeypox infection were attributed exclusively to person-to-person contact and all patients recovered.

TRANSMISSION

Monkeypox can be caught from infected rodents such as rats, mice and squirrels in parts of west and central Africa. People can get it from an infected animal if they're bitten or they touch its blood, body fluids, spots, blisters or scabs. It may be also possible to catch monkeypox by eating meat from an infected animal that has not been cooked thoroughly. Monkeypox has not been detected in animals in the UK yet.



Monkeypox does not spread easily between people. Person-to-person spread is uncommon, but it may occur through:

contact with clothing or linens such as bedding and towels used by an infected person

direct contact with monkeypox skin lesions or scabs (including during sex)

coughing or sneezing of an individual with a monkeypox rash

The virus enters the body through broken skin (even if not visible), the respiratory tract, or the mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth).

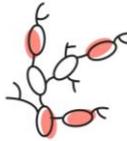
The scabs may also contain infectious virus material. An individual is contagious until all the scabs have fallen off and there is intact skin underneath.

SYMPTOMS

The incubation period (time from infection to onset of symptoms) for monkeypox is usually between 5 and 21 days. The symptoms of monkeypox include:



fever and chills



swollen lymph nodes



rash



backache and
muscle aches



exhaustion
and headache

The invasion period is characterized by fever, intense headache, swelling of the lymph nodes, back pain, muscle aches and lack of energy. Within 1 to 5 days after the appearance of fever, [a rash develops](#), often beginning on the face then spreading to other parts of the body. The rash may be sometimes confused with chickenpox. It starts as raised spots, which turn into small blisters filled with fluid. These blisters eventually form scabs which later fall off. The symptoms of monkeypox usually last from 2 to 4 weeks.

According to WHO, the clinical presentation of monkeypox resembles that of smallpox - a related orthopoxvirus infection. However, monkeypox is less contagious than smallpox and causes less severe illness.

DIAGNOSIS

Clinical diagnosis of monkeypox can be difficult, as it is often confused with other infections such as chickenpox. A definite diagnosis of monkeypox requires assessment by a health professional and specific testing in a specialist laboratory. In the UK, the designated diagnostic laboratory is the [Rare and imported pathogens laboratory \(RIPL\)](#) at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Porton Down. Suspected cases should be discussed with the [imported fever service](#) prior to submitting samples for laboratory testing.

Monkeypox has been listed as a notifiable disease in law from 8 June 2022. This means all doctors in England are required to notify their local council or local Health Protection Team (HPT) if they suspect a patient has monkeypox. Laboratories must also notify the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) if the monkeypox virus is identified in a laboratory sample.



TREATMENT

Monkeypox infection is usually mild and most people recover within several weeks without treatment. Vaccination against smallpox can be used for both pre and post-exposure and is up to 85% effective in preventing monkeypox. People vaccinated against smallpox in childhood may experience a milder disease. However, severe illness can occur in some individuals. The WHO estimates that severe cases are more commonly among children and are related to the extent of virus exposure and person's overall health. If the symptoms are severe or if a person is at higher risk of getting seriously ill (for example, if they have a weakened immune system), they may need to stay in a specialist hospital until they recover. Complications of monkeypox can include secondary infections, bronchopneumonia, sepsis, encephalitis, and infection of the cornea with ensuing loss of vision.

As monkeypox can spread through close contact, The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) advises that diagnosed people [self-isolate at home](#) to reduce the risk of spreading the infection.



PREVENTION

Although monkeypox is rare, there are certain things that you could do to reduce your risk of getting it while travelling in west and central Africa.

- wash your hands with soap and water regularly or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- do not touch wild or stray animals, including dead animals
- do not go near any animals that appear unwell
- do not eat or touch meat from wild animals (bush meat)
- only eat meat that has been cooked thoroughly
- avoid close contact with people who are unwell and may have monkeypox
- do not share bedding, towels and other materials that may be contaminated with the virus

If you live with other people who have been diagnosed with monkeypox, you should limit your contact with them. Sleep in a separate room and use a separate bathroom if available. Do not share bedding and make sure you use separate towels from other people in your home. Clean your hands frequently throughout the day by washing with soap and water for 20 seconds. Also, regularly clean surfaces such as door handles and light switches with detergents and bleach. Moreover, make sure that you use your own crockery and cutlery.



REFERENCES

NHS

WHO

GOV UK

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