Monkeypox: What You Need to Know

Monkeypox is a rare disease that can infect animals and people. It is usually found in parts of Africa, but cases have recently been detected in other parts of the world, including the United States.

How is monkeypox spread?
Monkeypox is caused by a virus. In central and western Africa, people are infected with monkeypox through contact with animals that can carry the virus, such as mice and rats. Monkeypox can also be spread from person-to-person. The main ways people spread the virus include:

- Direct contact with the skin of an infected person, especially a monkeypox lesion.
- Breathing in the droplets produced when an infected person sneezes or coughs nearby.
- Touching objects that are contaminated with the virus, including bedding, clothing, or shared eating utensils.
- Rarely, from an infected pregnant woman to her fetus.

Infection with monkeypox usually takes close contact with an infected person. For example, some people who have been diagnosed with monkeypox in the United States and Europe may have been infected during sex. Unlike COVID-19, monkeypox is not typically spread through small particles in the air, making it harder to become infected. So, if someone infected with monkeypox coughs or sneezes, only those within a few feet of the person might catch it.

What does monkeypox look like?
People who have been diagnosed with monkeypox outside of Africa have all had skin blisters. Some have only a few – or even a single lesion – on the penis, anus, hands, feet, arm, legs or face. Sometimes blisters form on the palms or soles of the feet, which are unusual places to have a rash.

The blister usually starts with a bump that has fluid inside. The bump then becomes dry and scabs. Some, but not all, of those diagnosed with monkeypox have felt sick with fever, headaches, tiredness or swollen glands. These symptoms may occur before any skin lesions appear.

How serious is monkeypox?
While monkeypox can be a serious infection, most people recover completely. In parts of Africa where monkeypox is more common, 99% of infected people survive.

Are there tests for monkeypox?
There are PCR tests for monkeypox, which is the same technology used to diagnose COVID. For monkeypox, a swab of a blister is sent to be tested.

Is there a treatment for monkeypox?
There are medicines that can be used to treat monkeypox, and these are available in the United States. Vaccines that have been made to prevent Smallpox can also work to prevent monkeypox. These vaccines can be given before or after an exposure to someone with monkeypox.

What should I do if I think I might have monkeypox?
If you think you have monkeypox, you should immediately contact your provider or local health department before you travel to a clinic or hospital. If you have a skin lesion, it can be tested for the monkeypox virus.

Where can I learn more about monkeypox?
You can find more information about monkeypox by visiting these sites:

- CDC
  www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html
- NC Department of Health and Human Services
  https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/diseases/monkeypox.html

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