



UK Health
Security
Agency

Designated contact number:

Monkeypox: contact information sheet for category 1A and 1B contacts

Introduction

You have been given this factsheet as you have been identified as someone who has had contact with a case of monkeypox. The risk of catching this infection is very low. To help stop the spread of monkeypox and to protect individuals that you come into contact with, it is important that you report any symptoms that develop in the 21 days after your contact with the case.

Monkeypox

Monkeypox is a rare disease that is caused by infection with monkeypox virus. It is most commonly seen in central and west Africa but there has been a recent increase in cases in the United Kingdom, as well as other parts of the world where it has not been seen before.

Infection mainly spreads between people through direct (skin to skin) contact or close contact via particles containing the monkeypox virus. Less commonly, infection can also be spread via contaminated objects such as clothing, linen (bedding or towels) and soft furnishings. It can take between 5 to 21 days from contact with an infected person for symptoms to develop.

Monkeypox usually causes a mild illness that resolves without treatment and most people recover within a few weeks. However, severe illness can occur in some people, in particular young children, pregnant women and those with an impaired immune system.

As monkeypox virus is related to the virus causing smallpox, vaccines designed for smallpox also provide some protection against monkeypox. Therefore, these vaccines can be given to individuals who have had higher risk close contact with a monkeypox case in order to prevent or reduce the severity of the infection. You will be advised whether or not you will be offered the vaccine. You may be offered the vaccine if you are deemed to be at higher risk

What symptoms should I be aware of:

The illness often begins with:

- fever
- headache
- muscle aches
- backache
- swollen lymph nodes
- chills
- exhaustion

Within 1 to 5 days after the onset of fever, a rash develops, often beginning on the face, groin or hands, then spreading to other parts of the body. It starts as raised spots, which turn into small blisters filled with fluid (lesions). These blisters eventually form scabs which later fall off. An individual with monkeypox is infectious from when their symptoms start until their rash has scabbed over, all the scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed underneath. This may take several weeks. In some people, illness may be milder with only a small number of skin lesions and no other symptoms.

If you become ill in the 21 days after contact with the case

You will have been provided with a number to contact. Let your designated contact know if you become unwell with a temperature of more than 38°C or any of the other symptoms listed above so that further assessment and testing can be arranged. While you are waiting for assessment and/or the results of your test, you should self-isolate at home, and if you need medical advice call your GP or NHS 111. Do not visit your GP practice, and do not travel or go to work.

If you receive a negative test result and no longer have symptoms, you do not have to continue isolating. However, if you then develop any further symptoms within the 21 days you should again report this to your designated contact and self-isolate until assessed.

It is important that you report any symptoms during the 21 days, however mild, and in particular any signs of a rash (even if it is only one or two spots). As individuals with monkeypox can be infectious to others from the onset of their symptoms, it is important to report any of these symptoms so that UKHSA can arrange for you to be assessed quickly and appropriately.

You may still develop symptoms, even if you have received the vaccine as it is not 100% effective. Being vaccinated may mean that you only develop milder symptoms, but you should still report these to your contact point.

Treatment for monkeypox is mainly supportive. The illness is usually mild and most of those infected will recover within a few weeks without treatment.

More information about monkeypox

UKHSA webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/monkeypox>

WHO factsheet: <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/monkeypox>