



UK Health
Security
Agency

Designated contact number:

Monkeypox: contact information sheet for category 2 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, but as you have had contact with a case of monkeypox there is still a chance that you may be infected. To help limit 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 close contact with a monkeypox case in order to prevent or reduce the severity of the infection.

What actions should I take?

The following actions are important for the health and safety of you, your family and anyone else that you may have contact with, even if the risk to family and contacts is low. These actions will reduce the spread of infection to others and ensure that if you develop the infection it can be identified quickly:

- inform your designated contact point daily of fever or any of the other symptoms below within 21 days of your last exposure
- where possible, try and avoid contact with young children, pregnant women and those who are immunosuppressed
- you may be advised to stay off work for 21 days from your last exposure if you work with children, pregnant women or those who are immunosuppressed. The UKHSA or your employer will inform you if this applies to you
- avoid intimate/sexual contact with others for 21 days after your last exposure
- any non-essential medical or dental treatment should be postponed. You should discuss any essential treatment required with the designated contact point before attending a healthcare facility
- international travel is not advised during the 21 days after your last exposure. You should be aware that your travel insurance may not be valid if you have been advised not to travel during this time
- you may be offered a smallpox vaccine at a clinic to help prevent or reduce the severity of infection. You can leave the house to attend the clinic. If possible, you should walk, cycle, drive or be driven by a household member (if they are not pregnant or immunosuppressed). If private transport is not available, public transport can be used, however busy periods should be avoided

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 few 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 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>