



Mpox (monkeypox): information sheet for category 2 contacts

Introduction

You have been given this information sheet because you have had contact with someone who has mpox (previously known as monkeypox). The risk of you getting this infection is very low, but as you have had contact there is still a chance that you may be infected. To help limit the spread of mpox and to protect other people that you come into contact with, it is important that you report any symptoms that develop in the 21 days after your last contact with the person who has mpox.

If you develop symptoms, you should phone NHS 111 or your [sexual health clinic](#) for clinical advice and an assessment.

What is mpox?

Mpox 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.

Mpox can be caused by 2 main types (called clades) of monkeypox virus. The majority of recent cases globally, and all cases that have been seen in the UK are caused by viruses belonging to Clade II, which causes less severe illness than those belonging to Clade I. You have been in contact with someone who has mpox caused by a Clade II virus.

Infection spreads between people mainly through direct contact with skin lesions (including during sexual contact, kissing, cuddling and holding hands) or close contact via particles containing the 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 someone who has mpox for symptoms to develop.

Mpox 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 the viruses that cause mpox and smallpox are similar, vaccines designed for smallpox also provide some protection against mpox. Therefore, these vaccines can be given to people who have had close contact with someone who has mpox 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 them is low. These actions will ensure that if you have mpox it can be identified quickly which will help reduce the spread of infection to others.

You should follow the actions below for 21 days from your last contact with the person who has mpox:

- contact NHS 111 or your [sexual health clinic](#) if you develop a fever or any of the other symptoms described below
- refrain from sexual or intimate contact and other activities involving skin to skin contact with other people
- international travel is not advised. You should be aware that your travel insurance may not be valid if you have been advised not to travel during this time
- if you need to get health or dental care, discuss this with the health or dental facility staff before attending. Let them know that you are a contact of someone who has mpox

You may be offered a smallpox vaccine at a clinic to help prevent or reduce the severity of infection.

What symptoms should I be aware of?

The illness often begins with:

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

Within 1 to 5 days after the onset of fever, a rash may develop, 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. Someone who has mpox 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.

It is important to check regularly for any lesions, as some people may develop a milder illness with only a small number of skin lesions and no other symptoms.

If you become ill in the 21 days after contact with someone who has mpox

If you become unwell with a temperature of more than 37.5°C or any of the other symptoms described above, you should call NHS 111 or your [sexual health clinic](#) for clinical advice, and an assessment so that testing can be arranged. You should let them know you are a contact of someone who has mpox. Do not visit the clinic without prior arrangement.

While you are waiting for your assessment and/or the results of your test you should self-isolate at home (see below). If you receive a negative test result, you do not have to continue isolating. However, if you then develop any further symptoms (for example, a rash, high temperature, swollen lymph nodes) within the 21 days you should self-isolate again and call your healthcare provider for a further assessment.

If you receive a negative test result for mpox and your symptoms do not resolve you should call your GP or NHS 111 as there may be another cause for your symptoms.

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). People who have mpox can be infectious to others from the onset of their symptoms, so it is important to report any of these symptoms to your healthcare provider so that you can be assessed quickly and appropriately and the risk of spreading mpox to your friends and family can be reduced.

You may have been given the smallpox vaccine in order to prevent or reduce the severity of infection. However, the vaccine is not 100% effective and so you may still develop symptoms (though these are likely to be milder). You should still report any symptoms that you develop, however mild, to your healthcare provider as you could still pass mpox on to others.

Treatment for mpox is mainly supportive. The illness is usually mild and most people who have mpox recover within a few weeks without treatment.

How to self-isolate safely if you develop symptoms

If you develop symptoms of mpox, follow the advice below while you are waiting for your assessment or test result:

- you should isolate at home. This means not going to work, school, public areas or any social gatherings. You may be eligible for [financial support](#) if you are unable to work
- you should limit close contact with others in your household and sleep in a separate room if this is possible
- refrain from sexual or intimate contact and other activities involving skin to skin contact with other people
- it is particularly important to avoid close contact with young children, pregnant women and those with an impaired immune system as they may be at higher risk of serious illness
- do not share items such as bedding, towels, wash cloths, toothbrushes, or razors
- do not share food and drinks and cups, utensils and dishes
- do not invite or allow social visitors, such as friends and family, to visit you at home

- you should only leave your home for essential purposes such as emergencies, urgent medical appointments, or for urgent health and wellbeing issues
- any non-essential medical or dental treatment should be postponed. You should discuss any essential treatment required with your healthcare provider

If you need to travel for an essential purpose you should walk, cycle or drive your-self. If this is not possible, you can be driven by a household member (if they are not pregnant or do not have an impaired immune system) and you should wear a well-fitting surgical face mask or double-layered face covering while in the car. If private transport is not available, you can use public transport, but you should avoid busy periods, cover any lesions with cloth (for example using scarfs or bandages) and wear a face covering.

If you are diagnosed with mpox infection you may be advised to follow [the guidance for people who have mpox infection who are isolating at home](#).

More information about mpox

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

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

Useful links

Find a sexual health clinic: www.nhs.uk/service-search/sexual-health/find-a-sexual-health-clinic

Financial support: www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/unable-to-work

Guidance for infected people who are isolating at home: www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-people-with-monkeypox-infection-who-are-isolating-at-home