



Frequently Asked Questions on Monkeypox

1) What is monkeypox?

- Monkeypox is a viral infection that causes fever and rash or fluid-filled blisters.
- Other symptoms include swollen lymph nodes, muscle aches, headaches.

2) Is there more than one kind of monkeypox?

- There are two types of monkeypox:
 - A) Clade I is more severe but has not spread to countries outside Africa.
 - B) Clade II is milder (mortality rate of closer to 0.03%) but has spread to other countries through travellers.

3) Why is monkeypox in the news now? What is this outbreak about?

- Since May 2022, human monkeypox cases have been reported in many countries around the world.
- These cases have occurred in countries that previously did not have locally transmitted infections, and in people without travel links to Africa, or contact with a traveller.
- The main mode of transmission of the infection in the current outbreak seems to be from close physical contact, including sexual contact. Data shows that this outbreak involves the milder Clade IIb type.

4) Can you catch monkeypox from animals?

- The virus is found in animals like rodents, monkeys & squirrels in Central & West Africa.

5) How can you catch monkeypox?

Monkeypox is spread by:

- Touching, eating, handling or being bitten by an infected animal like rodent, monkey or squirrel in Central or West Africa.
- Physical contact with an infected person, or touching the rash, scabs or blister fluid from an infected person. Being a sexual partner of an infected individual or living with them is considered high risk.
- Touching or handling items such as clothing or bedding contaminated by an infected person.
- Being close to an infected person (typically within 2 metres) when they cough or sneeze.

6) How infectious is monkeypox?

- Monkeypox is not easily transmitted. Risk of transmission through person-to-person transmission is typically low but can occur through close contact with respiratory secretions, contact with the skin lesions of an infected person or recently contaminated objects.

7) What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

- Monkeypox usually has two stages:
 - A) The first stage usually begins with fever, headache, body ache and swollen lymph nodes. Other less common symptoms may include sore throat and cough.
 - B) The second stage consists of a rash that changes appearance over 2-3 weeks.
 - Rash usually appears 1 to 3 days after the fever, starting on the face and spreading to the arms and legs.

- The rash may start out flat or raised but usually develops into fluid-filled blisters. The blisters usually grow bigger; the fluid may turn into pus.
- Scabs or crusts form, dry up, and fall off eventually, after 1-3 weeks.
- If spread by sexual contact, rash can be in the mouth or genital areas (private parts).
- The images below show different stages of the monkeypox rash.
- However, in the current 2022 outbreak of monkeypox, these 2 phases may occur in any order, and symptoms may be relatively milder, with more skin blisters occurring in the genital area than over the rest of the body.



a) early vesicle,
3mm diameter



b) small pustule,
2mm diameter



c) umbilicated pustule,
3-4mm diameter



d) ulcerated lesion,
5mm diameter



e) crusting of a mature
lesion



f) partially removed
scab

Images courtesy of UK Health Security Agency

8) How serious is monkeypox infection? Can people become severely ill or die?

- Most cases of monkeypox are mild and recover well.
- Monkeypox can very rarely cause severe infection, or even death with Clade I being more deadly than Clade II.
- Persons infected with the Clade I may have higher risk of severe disease or death. The fatality rate of Clade I type of monkeypox virus is around 10% while that of Clade II is less than 1%.
- Persons with weakened immune systems and young children may have higher risk.

9) Has monkeypox infection ever been seen in Singapore prior to 2022?

- Monkeypox is not found naturally in animals in Singapore.
- The first imported case of monkeypox was diagnosed in Singapore in 2019, in a traveller from Nigeria attending a conference here. He was admitted to an isolation room in NCID and recovered well, and there was no spread of monkeypox to other people.

10) How is monkeypox spread to countries outside Africa?

- Infected travellers coming from the affected countries can spread infection to others through close contact. Investigations are ongoing on the current multi-country outbreak.
- Over 47,000 cases have been reported from 100 countries, as of 30 August 2022, across all continents except Antarctica.

11) How long does it take to show signs of infection after exposure to monkeypox?

- The incubation period refers to the duration from exposure to starting to have symptoms.
- Incubation period for monkeypox is usually 5 to 13 days, and may go up to 21 days.

12) How long does it take to recover from monkeypox?

- Persons with monkeypox infection usually recover in 2 to 4 weeks, depending on how severe their infection was.

13) How long do monkeypox cases remain infectious?

- The person can transmit the infection on to other people from the start of symptoms such as fever or rash, until their blisters have completely healed and the scabs have fallen off.

14) How is monkeypox diagnosed?

- If monkeypox is suspected, a fluid sample is taken from the skin rash and sent to the lab to test for monkeypox virus.
- Meanwhile, precautions will be taken to prevent spread of infection to other people.

15) Can monkeypox be treated?

- Most patients with monkeypox require only supportive care, such as fluids, treatment for fever, pain or itch, and will make a full recovery.
- Severe cases can be treated with antivirals (such as cidofovir).
- From 22 August 2022, monkeypox cases will be able to recover safely at their place of residence under the Home Recovery Programme (HRP), if they are assessed to be clinically stable by a doctor and their place of residence is suitable for home recovery. Cases assessed to be at higher risk of complications will continue to be managed in hospitals.

16) Who is at risk of catching monkeypox from a monkeypox patient?

- Monkeypox can be spread to other people if they have close contact with the patient.
- Sexual contact, or direct physical (skin-to-skin, face-to-face) contact with a family member probably carries the biggest risk of person-to-person spread, but persons in the same household are also at risk, especially if they are caring for the infected person, or come into close contact with their clothing, bedding or other personal effects.

17) how can I protect myself and my loved ones from monkeypox?

- While the risk to the general public remains low, precautions you can take include:
 - Avoid high-risk sexual activity, such as having multiple sex partners or casual sex.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick, especially if they have a fever or rash.
 - If you are seeing or caring for a sick person, wear protective gear such as rubber/latex gloves, a splash-proof gown and a facemask. Wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.
 - Avoid handling wild or sick animals if possible; if you do, wear rubber/latex gloves and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.
 - If you are travelling, avoid eating bushmeats if possible; if you do, make sure the meat is thoroughly cooked, and hot all the way through.
 - Avoid contact with any bedding that has been in used for a sick person or animal.

- Taking the usual precautions during sexual intercourse, such as the correct use of a condom (which will also reduce the risk of other STIs).
- Seek medical attention immediately if you become sick.

18) What should I do if I think I have been exposed to monkeypox?

- Stay calm, and try to get information if you were exposed to monkeypox, if possible.
- If you develop fever, rash or are otherwise unwell within 21 days after returning from overseas, you should always seek medical attention, and inform your doctor of your travel and any relevant contact with infected persons or animals.
- If your illness is assessed to be possible monkeypox, your doctor will contact MOH and you may be tested for monkeypox.

19) Is there any vaccine to prevent monkeypox, or to take after exposure?

- Smallpox vaccine can be given after exposure to monkeypox, and is about 85% effective in preventing monkeypox disease.
- Smallpox vaccine can cause rare but very serious side effects, and should only be used under direction of public health authorities. Smallpox vaccine is not currently commercially available.
- There is currently no recommendation for vaccination before travel.

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