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| Monkeypox (MPX) |
| Fact sheet for consumers |
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# What is MPX?

Monkeypox (MPX) is a disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. It typically results in a mild illness associated with a rash. It is spread mostly through skin-to-skin contact with someone who has MPX. Most people recover within a few weeks.

Since May 2022, there has been a global increase in MPX cases, involving more than 100 countries. MPX is currently spreading within local communities in regions where MPX is not usually seen. The current outbreak is mostly impacting men who have sex with men.

# What are the symptoms of MPX?

Symptoms may develop up to 21 days from close contact with someone with MPX.

MPX symptoms can include a rash that can be painful and affect any part of the body including:

* genitals
* area around the anus and buttocks
* inside the mouth
* face
* hands and arms
* feet and legs.

The rash associated with MPX may involve vesicles, pustules, pimples or ulcers. The number of lesions varies. The rash may change and go through different stages, like [**chickenpox**](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/chickenpox), before finally becoming a scab that falls off.

Other MPX symptoms can include general symptoms that can occur before or alongside the rash, such as:

* [**fevers**](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/fever)
* chills
* muscle aches
* swollen [**lymph nodes**](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/lymphatic-system)
* exhaustion
* headache
* anal and rectal pain
* pain on urination.

Symptoms can resemble sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as [**herpes**](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/genital-herpes) or [**syphilis**](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/syphilis) as well as other diseases with a rash such as measles or chickenpox.

Most people with MPX have a mild illness and recover within a few weeks. In some circumstances, people may develop severe disease and require hospitalisation.

Children, pregnant women and people with a weakened immune system are considered at higher risk of developing severe disease.

# What should you do if you develop symptoms of MPX

If you develop symptoms of MPX you should stay home, restrict your contact with others, and seek medical care and testing without delay.

Wear a mask and call your GP clinic, [**Melbourne Sexual Health Centre**](https://www.mshc.org.au/), or your nearest sexual health service to let them know you will be attending. If you have any rashes, lesions, sores or scabs make sure these are covered.

# How does MPX spread?

MPX does not spread easily between people. It is mostly spread from person-to-person through prolonged or intimate contact with someone who has MPX, especially with skin rashes, lesions, sores or scabs.

It can also spread through contact with clothing or linens (such as bedding or towels) used by an infected person. Sometimes it can spread through respiratory droplets (such as coughs and sneezes) from an infected person, however this is less likely.

It does not spread via casual contact. In endemic areas, spread of MPX may occur through contact with infected wild animals.

People with MPX are infectious from the time that they develop their first symptoms until all lesions crust, dry and fall off with a new layer of skin forming underneath.

# Who is at risk?

Anyone who has close skin-to-skin contact (such as prolonged or intimate contact) with someone who has MPX can become infected.

People at highest risk are men who have sex with men, particularly those who are travelling to outbreak areas, have multiple sexual partners or attend large parties or sex on premises venues.

To date, most people with MPX in Australia have been infected while overseas but local transmission has been increasing, particularly in Victoria.

In Victoria, no infections have been seen so far in children and women.

# How can MPX be prevented

MPX can be prevented by avoiding contact with people with suspected or confirmed MPX. This includes contact with any potentially contaminated materials, such as bedding and towels, that have been in contact with an infected person.

MPX can also be prevented by limiting your number of sexual partners and ensuring that you have their contact details, until you are fully vaccinated. Vaccination will also protect people from MPX.

People who are at highest risk should be aware of the symptoms of MPX and self-monitor for symptoms.

Staying vigilant with hygiene measures including washing hands with soap and water or alcohol-based sanitiser is important.

# What treatment is available for MPX?

Treatment for MPX is mainly supportive. MPX typically results in mild illness and most people recover within a few weeks. Effective antiviral treatments are available for severe disease so early testing and presentation to a health service is important.

# Where to get help

* Always call an ambulance in an emergency (triple zero) Tel. 000
* Emergency department of your nearest hospital
* Your [GP (doctor)](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/serviceprofiles/general-practitioner-services)
* [NURSE-ON-CALL](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/serviceprofiles/nurse-on-call-service) Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for confidential health advice from a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
* Melbourne Sexual Health Centre Tel. (03) 9341 6200 or 1800 032 017 or TTY (for the hearing impaired) (03) 9347 8619
* Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council) Tel. (03) 9865 6700 or 1800 134 840
* Counseling and support services are available through your GP or health service. Further information can also be found on the Department of Health Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs website on <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-hubs>

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