

## **hMPXV: Frequently asked Questions**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE VIRUS**

#### **What is hMPXV?**

hMPXV is an abbreviation for human monkeypox virus. hMPXV is a DNA virus related to smallpox. It infects animals and is endemic to forested areas of Central and West Africa. It's unclear what animals act as a reservoir for hMPXV, but rodents are the prime suspects. The virus can also infect rats, squirrels, prairie dogs and some monkeys, among other animals. The first human case was identified in 1970. There are two strains of hMPXV: MPXV-1 is typically more severe and has a case fatality rate of up to 10%. MPXV-2 causes milder illness. The estimated case fatality rate in endemic countries is around 1%.

#### **Is it similar to smallpox?**

It's in the same group of viruses, but this isn't smallpox. hMPXV is much harder to catch, and it is not as severe. There are two strains of this virus, and the main one that's circulating now causes milder disease. Most people are recovering at home without any special treatment.

#### **Are there any cases in Oregon?**

Yes. For an update on the number of cases in Oregon, visit [www.oregon.gov/orthopox](http://www.oregon.gov/orthopox)

#### **Who can be affected by hMPXV?**

Anyone can be affected by hMPXV. Most of the cases in the current outbreak of the virus have been among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. As such, OHA is prioritizing the empowerment of men who have sex with men and the larger LGBTQIA+ and queer community with information, testing, prevention, and treatment strategies so they can take steps to protect themselves from the virus. At the same time, we anticipate cases in other groups of people, as small numbers of women and children have also been affected by hMPXV in the current outbreak.

**Why is it called monkeypox?**

It got its name because the first recognized outbreak was in monkeys in a Danish laboratory in 1958. However, the name “monkeypox” as it relates to the current and more recent outbreak is misleading, in that the natural hosts are most likely rodents, not non-human primates. Consistent with statements issued by the World Health Organization and UNAIDS, and to reduce the stigma associated with the name of the virus, OHA is using hMPXV to refer to this virus and the infection it causes.

**How is it spread?**

hMPXV is transmitted person to person most commonly by direct contact with rash, scabs, or body fluids from a person with hMPXV. Less commonly, hMPXV can also be spread by touching objects, fabrics, and surfaces that have been used by a person with hMPXV and through contact with respiratory secretions of a person with hMPXV.

**Can hMPXV spread through the air?**

An ill person who coughs or sneezes on someone else could possibly spread the infection. However, most transmission in the current outbreak appears to be from prolonged, skin-to-skin contact.

**What are the symptoms?**

Illness typically starts with fever, chills, malaise, and swollen glands. At the same time or within five days, rash appears. For some people, the first symptom may just be rash. The rash has typically been on the genitals, around the anus, on the face, or in the mouth. The rash starts with flat patches that then form large, firm bumps, which then fill with fluid or pus. These then scab and heal over with fresh skin, usually over two to four weeks.

**How long after exposure do symptoms start?**

Usually within seven to 14 days, with a range of five to 21 days.

**When can a person with hMPXV spread it to others?**

People with hMPXV may transmit the infection from when symptoms start until the rash has resolved. Passing the infection to others typically requires prolonged, close, skin-to-skin contact. People at increased risk

include sexual partners of an ill person, or family members and healthcare workers caring for someone ill with hMPXV.

### **Can the virus spread before someone knows they're sick?**

There have been no reports of hMPXV spreading before symptoms start. However, some people with hMPXV may not feel very sick. They might confuse their symptoms with another infection (like COVID-19) or may not notice their rash.

### **Is hMPXV a sexually transmitted disease?**

hMPXV is not a sexually transmitted disease. The virus spreads through direct, personal, often skin-to-skin contact with rash, scabs, or body fluids from a person with hMPXV. Such contact can happen during kissing, hugging, cuddling, and massage as well as during sex.

### **What if I think I have hMPXV?**

Call your healthcare provider to let them know before you go in to be seen. If you don't have a healthcare provider, reach out to your local public health authority, which can see you in one of its clinics or help you find a health care provider. If you plan to go to the emergency room or an urgent care, let the check-in staff know that you are concerned about hMPXV. They will ask you to wear a mask and help you cover rashes that may not be covered by your clothing while you wait to be seen.

### **hMPXV (aka monkeypox) vaccination and other prevention strategies**

It's hard to deal with another public health outbreak, especially with COVID-19 still affecting our lives. Here are some updates to how to stay safe while hMPXV is spreading in our communities.

### **Is there hMPXV vaccine in Oregon?**

Yes, Oregon has hMPXV vaccine. It is called Jynneos.

### **How is Oregon using hMPXV vaccine?**

Given as early as possible after exposure and before the appearance of rash, vaccine can be used to prevent hMPXV infection, reduce how long symptoms last, or make them less severe. This approach is known as post-

exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and it may help reduce the spread of hMPXV in our communities.

Oregon is using two approaches to hMPXV vaccination, standard post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and expanded PEP (or PEP+). In addition, Oregon will use a strategy that prioritizes first doses to provide as much protection against hMPXV in the community as rapidly as possible in the setting of limited vaccine supply.

### **What is standard PEP?**

Under standard PEP, anyone who has had close, personal, skin-to-skin contact with someone with possible or confirmed hMPVX in Oregon or in another location in the prior 14 days is eligible for vaccination. You will not be required to provide proof of test results.

### **What is expanded PEP (PEP+)?**

Under expanded PEP/PEP+, cisgender men, transgender men, transgender women, and non-binary people who have sex with men and who may be at increased risk of recent, close contact with someone with hMPXV are eligible for vaccination. This includes people who:

1. Have had more than one anonymous sexual partner (someone whom you couldn't get in touch with if you needed to) in an area with community spread in the prior 14 days
2. Have had more than one sexual partner at a bathhouse, sex club, bookstore, backroom, or sex party in an area with community spread in the prior 14 days

Cisgender men, transgender men, transgender women, and non-binary people who have sex with men, reside in an area with community spread, and have been diagnosed with rectal gonorrhea, rectal chlamydia, or syphilis in the prior 3 months are eligible for vaccination.

Finally, anyone who has sex with men and who has had sex in exchange for money, drugs, or something else of value with more than one partner in an area experiencing community transmission in the prior 14 days is also eligible for PEP+.

People eligible for vaccination will be asked to attest that they meet one or more of the criteria for vaccination. These criteria may look a little different around Oregon based on what's happening in your area.

### **How will Oregon prioritize first doses in PEP and PEP+?**

While vaccine supply is limited, Oregon will prioritize the administration of first doses of vaccine for people who are eligible for PEP and PEP+. Similar strategies have been adopted in the UK, Canada, and New York City. It maximizes the number of people who can benefit from vaccination. In this strategy, people will receive a first dose and then receive a second dose 2-3 months later when more vaccine becomes available. Typically, the second dose is given 28 days after the first. The available scientific data support this strategy.

For people who may not respond as well to vaccination, including people living with HIV with CD4 counts < 200 cells/mm<sup>3</sup> or other forms of moderate to severe immunosuppression, we will continue to offer second doses as close to 28 days after the first dose.

### **Should I be vaccinated if I've already had hMPXV?**

People with hMPXV infection may have short term protection from another hMPXV infection. We don't know how long that protection lasts. Right now, we are not offering PEP and PEP+ to people who have had hMPXV but may do so in the future.

### **What if I've been vaccinated against smallpox?**

We are offering PEP and PEP+ regardless of prior smallpox vaccination since the protection from the smallpox vaccine may decrease over time.

### **Will I need to pay for vaccine?**

The vaccine itself is completely free. There may be a fee for giving the vaccine that can be covered by insurance, but no one will be refused vaccine if they cannot pay. In addition, you will not be asked to provide any information or documentation of immigration status.

**What if I'm not eligible for vaccine right now?**

If you are not eligible for vaccine right now, you may be in the future when Oregon receives more vaccine from the CDC. In the meantime, here are some strategies you can use to stay hMPXV free.

***Knowledge is power***

Keep up-to-date with the facts about hMPXV from reliable sources. Information can change fast. Talk to trusted people in your life, your friends, and your sex partners.

***Fight stigma***

Anyone can be affected by hMPXV. There's no shame in finding out you have hMPXV. Many of us are learning we have it because we are taking proactive steps to look after our health and keep our community safe. Stigma stops us from accessing health care, contacting our sexual partners, and hurts our mental health. Let's take care of ourselves and each other.

***Know how hMPXV is transmitted***

hMPXV is not a sexually transmitted infection or disease. hMPXV is transmitted during close, personal, and skin-to-skin contact with the rash of a person with hMPXV. Such contact can occur during activities like, kissing, cuddling, hugging, massage, dancing skin-to-skin, and sex.

***Know the symptoms***

Check in with your body. Symptoms include new rashes, sores, blisters, and spots. Some people also get fevers, headaches, swollen and painful glands, muscle aches, or exhaustion. If you don't feel right, have a rash or other concerning symptom, avoid close, personal and skin-to-skin contact with others, and talk to a healthcare provider as soon as you can. Remind them that hMPXV is here in Oregon. While most people recover safely at home, treatment is available for more people with or at risk for more severe illness. Your healthcare provider can help you decide whether treatment is right for you.

Your local health [department](#) can be a helpful source of information, testing, treatment, and vaccination for you and/or your partners.

### ***Plan ahead***

When thinking about attending a festival, concert, party, or other event, consider the amount of close, personal, and skin-to-skin contact that may occur. For example, sporting events or concerts where people are more likely to be fully clothed and unlikely to have skin-to-skin contact are safer compared to clubs and parties where people are wearing minimal clothing and there is often skin-to-skin contact or spaces like saunas, bathhouses, or sex clubs where there is minimal to no clothing and often sexual contact.

When thinking about sex, check in with your partners. Tell them how you are feeling, whether you've had any recent illness or rashes, especially on the genitals or around the anus, and invite them to do the same. If you or your partner have been sick recently, are currently sick, or have any new rashes, avoid close, personal, and skin-to-skin contact and talk to a healthcare provider. Open communication with

partners and avoiding sex while you are sick are good practices in general. If you choose to have sex, choose activities that don't involve direct, skin-to-skin contact or kissing, cover rashes, wash hands, towels, bedding, sex toys, and other gear promptly, and consider limiting your number of partners. If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to hMPXV, reach out to your local public health agency to talk through the exposure to determine the next best step.

Even if you are into anonymous encounters, plan to keep a phone number (or other form of contact information) for your partners just in case you need to get in touch later. That way you can get in touch to let them know how they can be tested for hMPXV or get vaccine if eligible.

### ***Call ahead***

If you think you may be experiencing symptoms related to hMPXV, tell your healthcare provider before you go in for care. If you plan to use an urgent care or emergency room, tell the check-in staff that you



think you may have hMPXV. They will ask you to wear a mask and help you cover any rashes on exposed skin while you wait for care.

***Stay informed***

More information about hMPXV can be found at the following websites.

- [CDC](#)
- [OHA](#)
- [Multnomah County Health Department](#)
- [Cascade AIDS Project and PRISM](#)
- [Lane County Public Health](#)
- [Washington County Health Department](#)
- [Clackamas County Health Department](#)

**RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT OUTBREAK**

**How is OHA responding to the outbreak?**

OHA is working with local public health authorities, tribes, and community partners to share information about hMPXV, the outbreak, and infection prevention strategies with people who might be at increased risk of infection.

OHA also is sharing information with clinicians about the outbreak, how to recognize and test for hMPXV illness, and how to prevent spread.

Additional activities:

- OHA provided information to the public about symptoms and risk factors of hMPXV infection, and to seek care if these develop.
- The Oregon State Public Health Lab is conducting initial testing and arranging confirmatory testing for hMPXV through CDC.
- OHA is supplying vaccine to counties and health systems so they can help those at increased risk of infection to protect themselves.