

Social Gatherings, Safer Sex, & Monkeypox



WHAT IS MONKEYPOX?

Monkeypox is a rare infection caused by the monkeypox virus. An increasing number of cases have been reported in the U.S., Canada, and Europe—areas where it isn't usually found.

Monkeypox is an infection that can make you sick, including a rash (pox), sometimes with a flu-like illness. The virus can be spread through close personal contact, including during sex. Here is the latest information to help you make informed choices to stay healthy in spaces where monkeypox could be spread.

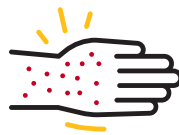
HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, personal, or skin-to-skin contact, including:

- ▶ Direct skin-to-skin contact with monkeypox rash, sores, or scabs from a person with monkeypox. Health experts believe this is the most common way that monkeypox is spreading in the U.S. at this time.
- ▶ Direct contact with materials like clothing, bedding, or towels, that have been used by someone with monkeypox.
- ▶ Close contact with respiratory droplets or with saliva through kissing and prolonged face-to-face contact with a person with monkeypox.
- ▶ Pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus during pregnancy.

These kinds of contact can happen during:

- ▶ Oral, anal, and vaginal sex or touching the genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina) or anus of a person with monkeypox.
- ▶ Hugging, massage, and kissing.
- ▶ Touching fabrics and objects during sex used by a person with monkeypox that have not been disinfected, such as bedding, towels, fetish gear, and sex toys.



HOW IS IT NOT SPREAD?

- ▶ The virus is not known to stay in the air and is not spread during short periods of sharing airspace with someone with monkeypox.
- ▶ It has not been shown to be spread by talking casually, walking by someone with monkeypox, or touching items such as doorknobs.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- ▶ Monkeypox symptoms usually start within two weeks after contact with the virus.
- ▶ Most people with monkeypox will get the rash or sores. Some get the rash or sores before (or without) the flu-like symptoms.
 - Flu-like symptoms can include: fever, headache, muscle aches and backache, swollen glands, chills, fatigue.
 - A rash or sores can be on the hands, feet, chest, face, penis, or inside or on the mouth, vagina, and anus.
 - The sores can look like pimples or blisters and may be painful or itchy. They will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing.
- ▶ Monkeypox can be spread from the time symptoms start until all sores, including scabs, have healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. This can take several weeks.

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How can you lower the chance of getting monkeypox at gatherings with close, personal, or skin-to-skin contact, such as raves, parties, clubs, and festivals?

- ▶ Consider how much close, personal, skin-to-skin contact is likely to occur at any gathering or event.
- ▶ Gatherings or events where people are fully clothed and not likely to have skin-to-skin contact are safer (less likely to spread monkeypox). Be mindful of activities like kissing, hugging, massage or sex, that might spread monkeypox.
- ▶ Gatherings where there is minimal clothing and direct, personal, skin-to-skin contact have some chance of spreading monkeypox. Avoid any rashes or sores you see on others and minimize skin-to-skin contact when possible.
- ▶ Spaces where little to no clothing is worn and sex could happen, such as back rooms, saunas, or sex clubs, have a higher chance of spreading monkeypox.



If you feel sick or have any rashes or sores, **do not attend any gatherings**, and call a healthcare provider. If you don't have a provider or health insurance, visit <https://health.maryland.gov/CSTIP/local> to find a health department near you.

How can you lower your chance of getting monkeypox during sex?

- ▶ Talk to your partner about any recent illness.
- ▶ Be aware of new sores or rashes on your or a partner's body, including the genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina) and anus.
- ▶ If you or a partner have recently been sick, feel sick now, or have a new rash or sores, do not have close, personal contact, including oral, anal or vaginal sex, and call a healthcare provider.
- ▶ If you or a partner have monkeypox, the best way to protect yourself and others is to not have close, personal contact, including oral, anal, or vaginal sex while you are sick, especially if you or a partner have any rash or sores. Do not share things like bedding, towels, fetish gear, sex toys, and toothbrushes.

If you or your partner have (or think you might have) monkeypox and you decide to have sex, here's how you can lower the chance of spreading the virus:

- ▶ Have virtual sex with no in-person contact.
- ▶ Masturbate together at a distance of at least 6 feet, without touching each other.
- ▶ Reduce skin-to-skin contact by having sex with your clothes on or covering any rash or sores.
- ▶ Avoid kissing.
- ▶ Wash your hands, fetish gear, sex toys and any fabrics (bedding, towels, clothing) after having sex. Find helpful tips for cleaning sex toys at <https://tinyurl.com/ybstmemu>.
- ▶ Limit your number of partners to lower the chances of spreading monkeypox.

If a healthcare provider has told you that you have monkeypox, you may be asked about the people you have had close, personal, or sexual contact within the last 21 days. This is to help stop the spread of monkeypox.



For more information, please scan this code or visit health.maryland.gov/monkeypox

This document was last revised August 17, 2022. This document is only updated when pertinent revisions are made.

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