

Information for people with mpox (formerly monkeypox)

What is mpox?

Mpox is an illness caused by a virus.

People are normally infectious and can pass on the virus from when they first develop symptoms, up until their sores/scab's crust, dry and fall off. This will normally span around two to four weeks.

You are more likely to have caught mpox if you have had close physical or sexual contact with someone who has mpox.

What to expect

Most people with mpox will develop a rash, spots, blisters or lesions (sores) on the infection site, commonly the genital and anal areas or in the mouth. These may spread throughout the body. Sometimes the skin sores can become very itchy and may cause severe pain. Symptoms may also include fever, headache, swollen glands, muscle aches or chills. Symptoms usually resolve within 2–4 weeks.

How mpox is spread

Mpox is not easily spread from person to person. It is less infectious than some other diseases such as measles or COVID-19. The virus can be passed on through:

- Skin-to-skin: such as touching or vaginal/anal sex
- Mouth-to-mouth: such as kissing
- Mouth-to-skin: such as oral sex or kissing the skin
- Touching clothing, bedding, towels, and some other objects (including sex toys) used by someone with mpox rash

Mpox is rarely passed on from face-to-face contact such as talking or breathing close to one another in a confined space for a long time.

Having two mpox vaccines may reduce your risk of having severe symptoms and passing on mpox. It is important that you follow the instructions of your public health team to avoid spreading the virus to others.

Restricting contact

Restriction includes:

- Restricting physical contact with others. You must not have direct sexual contact until your sores/scab's crust, dry and fall off (including kissing and intimate touching).
- Restricting contact with people who are at risk of serious disease, including immunocompromised people, young children, people with a history of severe atopic eczema, and pregnant people.
- Where able, sleeping in a separate room and limiting contact with household members.

- Covering skin sores (where possible – e.g. with long pants and sleeves and/or band aids and dressings).
- Not sharing clothing, bedding, towels and unwashed crockery and cutlery.
- Avoiding close direct contact with animals, including domestic animals, (such as cats, dogs, mice, and other rodents), livestock, and other captive animals, as well as wildlife due to the possibility of human-to-animal transmission.
- All waste, including medical waste, should be disposed of in a safe manner which is not accessible to rodents and other scavenger animals.
- Where possible, avoid the use of contact lenses to prevent infection of the eyes. Where this is not possible, ensure hands are thoroughly washed prior to touching lenses or eyes, and cover open sores on hands.
- Do not donate blood, cells, tissue, breast milk, semen, organs, or faeces.

If you need to travel, you will need to discuss this with public health first. Public health will continue to assess what restrictions are necessary and keep you up to date.

Release from restrictions

This will likely be once all sores have crusted over, the scab has fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed underneath (this normally takes about 2–4 weeks).

Recovery

After you have been released from public health follow up, you can go back to your normal activities. The mpox virus has been detected in semen several weeks after all sores are healed. It is not currently known whether this can transmit the virus to other people, but we advise you to **use condoms for 12 weeks after recovery**.

When to get help

Occasionally people with mpox can get very sick, and their sores can be very painful. If your symptoms get worse or your pain is not well controlled with simple pain relief, please contact your primary healthcare provider.

If you need medical care, call ahead to the medical practice or hospital before visiting to let them know you are coming, advise them that you have mpox. Please cover any rashes or blisters on your skin and wear a mask.

Please get in touch with public health if you are not able to access primary care or prefer to not have your primary care provider involved and we can link you in with other health services.

If you are feeling very unwell, have severe shortness of breath or severe pain, please call 111. Tell the ambulance staff you have mpox and cover any sores for when they arrive.

Self-care

It is important to drink lots of fluid, and simple pain relief such as paracetamol may be useful for pain, body aches, headache, and fever. You can also take ibuprofen if it is suitable for you. Your doctor can also prescribe stronger pain relief if it is required. If the

sores are very itchy, you can take an antihistamine. Someone can collect this for you from the pharmacy or your doctor.

Try to keep any sores clean to reduce the chance of them becoming infected, especially those in sensitive areas. You can do this by washing your skin with regular soap and warm water, sterilized water or antiseptic. Cover sores that ooze or are leaking with fluid with clothing, dry dressings or a bandage. If a sore becomes infected, it may become red and tender, shiny, swollen or hot and you may feel unwell. If this happens, it is important you let a health professional know. Saltwater rinses can be used for sores in the mouth, and warm baths with baking soda and Epsom salts can ease the discomfort of sores on the body.

If you need to stay at home while unwell

We are happy to provide a letter to give to your employer/work, that doesn't mention which illness you have or how this was contracted to protect your privacy.

People experiencing hardship can apply for financial support from the Ministry of Social Development. To check if you are eligible, visit www.check.msd.govt.nz/ or call 0800 559 009 (Mon–Fri 7am–6pm; Sat 8am–1pm).

If you need mental health advice or support while isolating free call or text 1737 anytime. There are also a range of dedicated [LGBTQI support services](#) available.

Hygiene practices

Clean your hands frequently with soap and water, and dry thoroughly using your own dedicated towel. You can also use hand sanitiser. Take care if you have open blisters or sores on your hands. Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.

If you live with others and are going into shared spaces cover skin sores with a bandage or clothing such as long sleeve tops and trousers/pants. If you have sores on your feet, wear socks, and if on your hands cover with dry dressings.

When sitting on furniture with fabric covers, you can use a folded sheet or towel to protect the surface and make cleaning easier for yourself.

Laundry/washing

Make sure other people do not wear any clothes you have worn, use any towels you have used, or sleep in sheets you have slept in or used since you got sick.

You should separate your laundry from other people and wash and dry your own laundry. Wash items with laundry detergent at the highest temperature stated on label. Avoid using an 'eco' or 'quick wash' cycle. Dry clothes as normal.

When handling towels, clothes or bedding you have used, be careful not to shake these as this can disperse infectious particles into the air.

Pets

Avoid close direct contact with animals, including pets (such as cats and dogs), livestock, and any other wild or captive animals. This is because you might infect those animals and

they could then infect other people. Do not let your pets into the room you are isolating in, on to, or into your bed.

Waste disposal

As an additional precaution, all disposable rubbish bags should be no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full and placed into a second rubbish bag, tied securely, before being disposed of as usual with your domestic waste. This is especially important for any waste like used bandages, tissues, or other waste contaminated with body fluids.

People you live with

People you live with can protect themselves by cleaning their hands regularly and keeping their distance from you. If they are likely to encounter you, you should stay 1 metre apart. If they develop symptoms, they must seek healthcare for a review and testing.

Cleaning after you have recovered from mpox

If another person is carrying out this cleaning, they should wear a medical mask and gloves. Take care when using cleaning products, ensure you wash your hands thoroughly on completion of cleaning. Start cleaning surfaces higher up and work your way to the floor. This will make sure that any particulates or debris that have fallen to the floor will be cleaned last. Start by cleaning surfaces and objects that are cleaner and work your way to cleaning dirtier items (e.g. toilets).

Privacy

Your personal details are confidential. You do not need to tell anyone you have mpox unless they are providing health care to you, and we will never publish your name or any identifying information about you.

If we cannot directly reach the people you have had close or sexual contact with, we may need to publicise some information about at-risk locations, but we will not share any identifiable information about you as part of this. This information will only be shared, if necessary, to prevent or reduce a serious threat to public health.

Your employer may need to be notified if there was a risk of you passing on the virus to others while at work, although they will be required to keep any details private. You can also request a medical note stating you need to stay home for a medical reason, without disclosing you have mpox. This will always be discussed with you first.

We may also need to contact staff at external accommodation if you need to stay in a hotel, motel or other external accommodation. This will be to advise them on cleaning and disinfection practices necessary for linen and cleaning of rooms. We will discuss this plan with you first.

Further information

More information on mpox can be found at: [Mpox \(monkeypox\) \(info.health.nz\)](https://info.health.nz/mpox)

There is also information available on www.burnettfoundation.org.nz/mpx