

Let's talk wound care:

how to care for mpox sores while self-isolating

Most people who get mpox are able to manage their infection from home, but proper wound care can improve the experience. Caring for your sores, or rash, can help stop the virus from spreading to other parts of the body, reduce the chance of bacterial infection, and reduce pain.

Wound Care at Home

Materials needed:

- bandages
- hand-held mirror
- disposable gloves

Specific bandage materials could also help:

- transparent, waterproof bandages
- gauze
- gel-based first aid pads
- retention tape, to help bandages stay on

You can find these materials at your local drug store or pharmacy.



What are the signs and Symptoms of mpox?

Symptoms usually start between 5 and 13 days after a person is infected with the virus, but may take up to 21 days. In addition to a painful rash, symptoms might include fever, headache, feeling very tired and achy, and swollen lymph nodes.

- The rash starts as a few small sores, then more usually appear.
- Some people first notice sores in their genital or anal area, or their mouth, but sores can appear across the body.
- The sores swell with fluid, then pop. They then dry up and form scabs, which eventually fall off.
- The sores can be painful, although they might become itchy when scabs start to form.
- For some people, sores are the first or only symptom they have, and they do not know they are sick until they appear. The sores usually last for about 2 to 4 weeks.

Learn more about mpox
by visiting mpox.ca



Healthy wound healing:

- Wear disposable gloves, or wash your hands before and after direct contact with sores.
- Take off any bandages or clothing and use a hand-held mirror to look closely at the rash every day. You should expect to see fluid-filled sores that will eventually pop on their own. This fluid should be clear. After the sores pop, you will start to see scabs form and eventually fall off. Once the scabs fall off, you will see new skin form.
- Keep your sores clean. The best way is to let warm, soapy water run over them in the shower. Make sure to use gentle, non-scented soap on any sores. Do not scrub the sores as this could irritate them.
- Cover your sores to limit the spread of the infection to other parts of your body, or to others. Depending on where the sores are, you can cover the sores with clothing or with bandages. If you cover the sores with bandages, make sure to stick the sticky part of the bandage to the skin surrounding the sore, and not the sore itself.

if you notice swelling, redness, and heat on the skin around the sores, as well as green or yellow fluid coming from the sores, talk to your healthcare provider. This could mean you have a secondary bacterial infection, which may require prescribed antibiotics.

Household members providing care to people with mpox should use disposable gloves for direct contact with sores or potentially contaminated objects (e.g. surfaces, clothing, bedding). The gloves should be disposed of after use, followed by hand washing.

Dos and Don'ts:

DO:

- Use bandages to cover the rash to limit spread to others and to the environment.
- Keep sores clean and dry when not showering.
- Wash hands often, especially after direct contact with sores.
- If you have sores on your hands, wear disposable gloves when handling common objects or touching surfaces in shared spaces.
- Wear a well-fitting mask around other people until the rash and all other symptoms have resolved.
- Eat healthy foods and get plenty of rest to allow your body to heal.

DON'T:

- Don't pop or scratch sores. This does not speed up recovery and can spread the virus to other parts of the body, increase the chance of spreading the virus to others, and possibly cause the open sores to become infected by bacteria.
- Don't shave the area with the sores until the scabs have fallen off and a new layer of skin has formed. Shaving can spread the virus and cause more sores.
- Don't add any products to the sores, such as lotions or creams, unless directed by your healthcare provider.

Managing Pain

Many people experience intense pain from mpox sores. If your pain is severe, talk to your health care provider about medications that could help. You should also contact your health care provider if the pain is preventing you from eating or drinking, or being able to go to the bathroom. In the meantime, the techniques below can also help to reduce and manage your pain while recovering from mpox:

- Medicines like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and acetaminophen (Tylenol) can help you feel better.
- For sores in the mouth, rinse with salt water at least four times a day.

Remember: contact your health care provider if your pain becomes severe and unmanageable at home.