

Mpox Community Guide

What is mpox?

Mpox (formerly known as Monkeypox) is a viral infection with a rash that may be painful. Mpox can spread from person to person through contact with the lesions or scabs that may be found on the skin or mucosal surfaces (such as the eyes, mouth, throat, genitals, anus or rectum) of someone who is infected.

In Canada, the vast majority of outbreaks in 2S/GBTQ+ people have occurred through sexual transmission. In this guide you'll find all you need to know about mpox and how we can best protect ourselves and our communities.

How does mpox spread?

For 2S/GBTQ+ communities, the vast majority of mpox cases have spread through sexual contact including oral or anal sex and rimming.

Mpox can also spread from person to person through:

- Direct contact with rashes, sores, scabs and bodily fluids
- Respiratory droplets (such as when a person coughs or sneezes)
- Contact with materials that have been used by someone with mpox (such as bedding, linens, towels, dressings, needles, eating utensils and dishes)

[Recent evidence](#) suggests that some people can spread the virus up to four days before symptoms begin.

What are the symptoms of mpox?

Symptoms usually start within five to 13 days after being exposed to mpox but can start anywhere from five to 21 days after exposure.

Symptoms may begin with flu-like symptoms such as:

- Fever
- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Backache
- Sore throat and cough
- Swollen lymph nodes

1-5 days later, a rash or sores that can affect any part of the body appear. In some cases, people only get the rash.

Most people recover from mpox on their own within two to four weeks.

What should I do if I have symptoms?

If you think you are experiencing symptoms, contact your healthcare provider and notify them that you are concerned about mpox.

Make sure to isolate at home, keep any sores covered as much as possible, clean your hand and objects you touch regularly, and avoid close physical contact with others until a healthcare provider can examine you. Your healthcare provider will let you know if you need to get tested for mpox.

Notify any sexual partners so they can also monitor for symptoms.

What should I do if I test positive for mpox?

Remember infectious diseases are a part of life and mpox is no different.

If you get mpox, stay isolated away from others and avoid physical contact (kissing, touching, any kind of sex) while you are sick. Do not share objects like bedding, towels, clothing or utensils with others while you have symptoms. Be sure to wash or disinfect any items that came in contact with bodily fluids or a lesion. Stay home until any rash has fully resolved, the scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of skin has formed.

The severity of symptoms in mpox cases can vary. While most cases resolve on their own with rest and are often mild and resolve on their own within 2 to 4 weeks, some cases may require antiviral medications to treat symptoms. Consult a healthcare provider for treatment options.

If you test positive, notify your sexual partners so they can test and isolate if needed.

Caring for Someone with mpox?

If you're caring for someone with mpox, you should:

- Use personal protective equipment (PPE), including disposable gloves and medical mask.
- Encourage the person to cover their rash or sores (use bandages, wear a long sleeve shirt and long pants) and to wear a medical mask when you are close to them.
- Avoid skin-to-skin contact, including contact with rashes or sores.
- Clean your hands often with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after each contact with the person and after handling anything the person with mpox may have come into contact with.

Check out CBRC's [wound care resource](#) if you or someone you know has mpox.

How do I protect against mpox?

Vaccination is an important tool in preventing the spread of mpox among ourselves, our partners, and our communities. The mpox vaccine is available to adults 18 and older who are at high risk of exposure. The vaccine requires two doses, given 28 days apart for full protection. Regardless of when you received your first dose (i.e. 2022), you can receive a second dose of the mpox vaccine so long as you did not get mpox after your first dose.

[Research](#) shows the risk of getting mpox was lower for vaccinated people than those who were not vaccinated. Getting both doses provides the best protection against mpox in our communities.

The vaccine may cause some side effects. Most are mild to moderate, and do not last longer than seven days. Common side effects include:

- Redness, pain or swelling at the injection site
- Feeling tired
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Nausea

Visit mpox.ca to find out where you can be vaccinated.

How do I protect against mpox?

In addition to vaccination, consider the following to reduce risk of mpox cases in our communities:

- **Have Candid Conversations:** Talk openly with sexual partners about your sexual health history and theirs. Consider using barriers like condoms and dental dams to reduce risk.
- **Monitor for Symptoms:** Be aware of any new or unexplained sores or rashes on your or your partner's body, including the genitals and anus.
- **Practice Good Hygiene:** Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Avoid Close Contact:** If someone you know has mpox or is showing symptoms, avoid close physical contact, including touching shared objects like bedding or clothing. Remember to practice good hygiene if you do come in contact.

Been in contact with someone who has mpox?

Contact a healthcare provider if you have been in contact with a person who has mpox. Your healthcare provider may recommend you receive a mpox post-exposure vaccination.

Make sure to monitor yourself for symptoms and avoid close contact with others for 21 days. If no symptoms appear, you can continue with normal activities. If symptoms develop, you should isolate and contact a health care provider.

Key Takeaways

Get Vaccinated: Vaccination is an important tool in preventing the spread of mpox in our communities.

Be aware, not afraid: By staying informed, getting vaccinated and taking appropriate precautions, you are doing your part to protect yourself, your partner(s), and your communities.

Sexual Contact Spreads Mpox: For 2S/GBTQ+ communities, the vast majority of mpox cases have spread through sexual contact.

Symptoms to Watch For: Mpox symptoms start with flu-like signs, followed by a rash that progresses through several stages.

Symptomatic? Contact a Healthcare Provider: If you develop symptoms, especially a rash, contact a healthcare provider promptly to ensure proper diagnosis and care.

Supportive Care is Available: Treatment for mpox focuses on symptom relief, with medication available for some cases.

Stay Informed: Our understanding of mpox continues to evolve. Visit mpox.ca to stay up-to-date.