

What You Need To Know About Mpox!

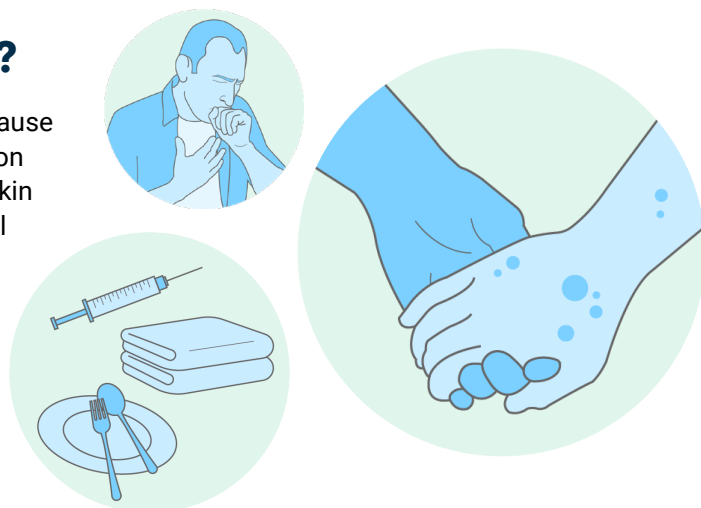
Why is mpox back in conversation? While cases have been increasing again in Canada this year, it is important to recognize that mpox never really left.

On August 14, 2024 the World Health Organization declared [the increase of mpox cases in African countries a public health emergency of international concern](#) due to the spread of a new variant. Although Canada has seen a rise in cases in 2S/GBTQ+ people, the Public Health Agency of Canada [reports](#) that the strain circulating in Canada differs from that in African countries.

While the situation continues to evolve, the safety of our communities remains a top priority. Our communities have tremendous experience rallying in response to infectious diseases and STIs and mpox is no different. During this time, it's important that we get caught up with vaccination, watch out for symptoms, and [stay informed](#).

What is Mpox and How Does it Spread?

Mpox (formerly known as Monkeypox) is a viral infection. It can cause a rash that may be painful. Mpox can spread from person to person through close contact with an infected person, including skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity, kissing, and other forms of physical intimacy. The virus can also be transmitted through respiratory droplets, shared objects like clothing or bedding, and contact with contaminated surfaces. In 2S/GBTQ+ communities, most mpox cases have spread through sexual contact.



What Are the Symptoms?

Symptoms can start five to twenty-one days after being in contact with someone who has mpox. A common symptom of mpox are a rash or sores that can affect any part of the body. This usually develops a few days after exposure, starting on the face and spreading to other body parts, including the genitals, hands, and feet. The rash progresses through several stages, from flat red spots to raised bumps, which eventually fill with fluid, form scabs, and then heal. In addition to the rash, symptoms can resemble the flu, including:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Back pain
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills and fatigue

Who is at Risk?

While most mpox cases reported in Canada have occurred through sexual contact among 2S/GBTQ+ people, our understanding of mpox is evolving and it is not confined to a specific group or setting. People with weakened immune systems and pregnant individuals may experience more severe symptoms and negative outcomes if they get mpox.

How Can We Protect Ourselves?

Vaccination is an important tool in preventing the spread of mpox in ourselves, our partners, and our communities. The vaccine Imvamune is authorized by Health Canada for immunization against mpox in adults 18 and older who are at high risk of exposure. The vaccine requires two doses, given at least 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. Getting both doses provides the best protection against mpox in our communities. Consult your local health authority to learn more about vaccine eligibility.

In addition to vaccination, consider the following to reduce risk of mpox infection 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.

What Should You Do If You Think You Have Mpox?

If you develop symptoms that could be related to mpox, 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 hands 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 and any next steps.

It's important to communicate openly with healthcare providers to ensure comprehensive care and support. Notify your sexual partners so they can monitor for symptoms as well.

Be aware, not afraid.

News of global outbreaks and increased cases of mpox in 2S/GBTQ+ communities can feel overwhelming. It is important to remember that the situation is being monitored closely by public health authorities and community-based organizations, including CBRC. By staying informed, getting vaccinated and taking appropriate precautions, you are doing your part to protect yourself, your partner(s), and your communities.

Want to learn more about mpox? Visit mpox.ca.

Mpox Severity Varies.

The severity of symptoms in mpox cases can vary. While most cases resolve on their own with rest within 2 to 4 weeks, some cases may require antiviral medications to treat symptoms.

Stay Informed.

Mpox is constantly evolving. Visit mpox.ca to learn more about mpox and stay up-to-date. Trusted sources such as Health Canada and your local health authority can provide further guidance on prevention, vaccination, and treatment. Having the facts about mpox means you can take the necessary steps to protect yourself and contribute to the health and well-being of our communities.

Resources/Information Sources:

- Government of Canada: [Mpox \(monkeypox\) - Canada.ca](https://mpox.ca)
- The World Health Organization: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/08/1153361> | https://www.who.int/health-topics/monkeypox#tab=tab_1