

# Mpox (monkeypox) – key information

Mpox is a viral disease usually found in west or central Africa. There has recently been an increase in cases globally, but the risk of catching it in New Zealand is very low. The virus is not as contagious as some other diseases, such as measles or COVID-19.

## Symptoms

Mpox symptoms can include a rash, spots, or blisters. Some people also develop cold and flu symptoms, including a fever or swollen glands.



Skin changes including a rash or sores



Headache



Fever and chills



Back, muscle and body aches



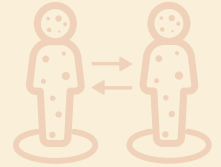
Tiredness



Swollen glands

## How it spreads

Mpox is not easily spread from person to person. The ways the virus can be passed on include:



- Close physical, intimate or sexual contact with someone who has mpox, via skin-to-skin contact
- Direct contact with the skin rashes, lesions, scabs or bodily fluids (e.g. saliva) of someone with mpox
- Touching clothing, bedding or towels used by someone with a mpox rash

While rare, mpox can also be passed on through breathing in droplets breathed out by someone who has the virus. As this requires prolonged contact and for people to be very close together the risk of the virus spreading in this way is very low.

People are normally infectious and can pass on the virus from when they first develop symptoms, up until their lesions or scabs crust, dry and fall off. This will normally take about two to four weeks.

## Seeking medical advice

If you develop symptoms stay home, self-isolate, and seek advice. Many illnesses can cause similar symptoms, so it is unlikely that it is mpox, but it's important to get help.

You should also seek advice if you have been exposed to mpox and have not heard from a health professional.

Consultation and testing for mpox is free for anyone with mpox symptoms who meets testing criteria or has been asked to test for mpox. People who are not NZ residents (including international students, seasonal workers and visitors) will also be able to access mpox consultation and testing free of charge.

Contact a sexual health clinic for free advice, call your GP, or ring Healthline for free anytime on **0800 611 116** – language interpreters are available.

## Who's most at risk

While anyone can get mpox, New Zealand's outbreak so far has mostly affected people who have multiple or anonymous sexual partners, particularly men who have sex with men and their sexual partners.

There is higher risk for these people.

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## What do cases need to do?

If you develop mpox you'll need to stay home and self-isolate for a minimum of seven days from onset of symptoms. This will reduce the risk of you passing on the virus to others.



Self-isolating means staying away from work, not having visitors in your home, and avoiding close contact with other people, including those you live with.

While you're isolating, health staff will be in contact regularly to check on your health. They will also provide advice on your symptoms, cleaning products, masks and waste disposal.

You'll be asked to provide information on where you've been recently and who you've been in close contact with, to check if you may have passed on the virus to others. Your right to privacy will be respected.

Once it has been seven days since your first lesion appeared, health staff will work with you to decide when you can leave isolation. You will be able to return to some of your normal activities but will be required to take extra precautions until all scabs or lesions have fallen off and new skin has formed where these were. This normally happens around two-to-four weeks after your symptoms start. You will need to have a final check-up by a health professional to finish isolating.

## Pain and complications

Sometimes if you have mpox the skin lesions can become very itchy and may cause severe pain. Your doctor can prescribe pain relief if it is required.

Occasionally, people with mpox can become very sick. If you are feeling very unwell, have severe shortness of breath or severe pain, please call an ambulance on 111 and let them know that you have mpox. Please wear a mask when the ambulance arrives.

## What do close contacts need to do?

If you are told you're a close contact of someone with mpox you do not need to self-isolate, but you will need to monitor your symptoms for 21 days from when you last had contact with the case.

Health staff will provide you with all the information you need when they contact you. If you develop any symptoms within the 21 days then you will need to stay home, self-isolate, and contact a health professional for further advice.



## For more information:

- **The Ministry of Health**  
[www.health.govt.nz/mpox](http://www.health.govt.nz/mpox)  
– information about mpox
- **The Burnett Foundation**  
[www.burnettfoundation.org.nz](http://www.burnettfoundation.org.nz)
- **Call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116**  
[www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-care-services/healthline](http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-care-services/healthline)

