

Mpox (monkeypox): Information for low-risk contacts

What is mpox (monkeypox)?

Mpox is a viral infection that causes a rash. It is usually spread by skin-to-skin contact with someone who has mpox. Most people recover within a few weeks.

Since May 2022, there has been a global increase in mpox cases reported from multiple countries where mpox is not usually seen. Most of the cases are in men who have sex with men.

While most mpox cases in NSW have been acquired overseas, a small number have acquired their infections in Australia.

What are the symptoms of mpox?

Symptoms usually begin 7-14 days after exposure. This can be as short as a few days or as long as 21 days.

Mpox symptoms may include:

- rashes, pimple-like lesions or sores, particularly in areas that are hard to see such as the genitals, anus or buttocks. and on the face, arms and legs.
- ulcers, lesions or sores in the mouth.
- people can experience fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills and/or exhaustion prior to the rash or lesions developing.

The lesions start as a flat red rash that develops into pustules, which then form crusts or scabs and fall off.

The risk of severe disease and complications such as secondary infection, sepsis and encephalitis is likely to be increased in people with immunocompromise, young children and pregnant women.

For more information, read the [NSW Health monkeypox \(mpox\) fact sheet](#) or [monkeypox \(mpox\) information hub](#).

How does mpox spread?

Mpox mainly spreads from one person to another by direct skin-to-skin contact. It may be spread by breathing in droplets breathed out by someone who has mpox during prolonged close contact, but this is

rare. It can also be spread through contact with infected bodily fluids or contaminated objects, such as bedding or clothes.

Mpox may be passed on during sex. It is not known how long the mpox virus remains present in semen and other genital excretions. People who have mpox should abstain from sex for the duration of their infection. People who have recovered from mpox should use condoms when engaging in sexual activity for 12 weeks after recovery.

People with mpox are infectious from the time they first get symptoms until all the lesions have crusted, the scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed underneath.

Why am I receiving this information?

You have been identified to be a contact of someone who has mpox. As you only had limited exposure to this person, you are considered a low-risk contact.

What should low-risk contacts do?

Unless you think you had close contact with someone with mpox, you do not need to take any special precautions except to look out for any symptoms of mpox for 21 days from the last time you were exposed to someone who has mpox.

You should also regularly wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

What to do if you develop mpox symptoms

If you develop mpox symptoms, you should:

- self-isolate at home and avoid all unnecessary contact with other people. If travelling home to self-isolate, you should go directly home, wear a mask and cover any exposed lesions. If you are unable to self-isolate, call the Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.
- contact your doctor and let them know you have been identified as a low-risk contact of someone with mpox and have symptoms. Your doctor should be able to advise on any tests that you may need.
- notify the Public Health Unit (1300 066 055) as soon as possible.

If you are concerned about any symptoms you may have, call your doctor for immediate care or call Triple Zero (000) immediately in an emergency.

What to do if you need to see your doctor or get tested in person

Depending on your symptoms your doctor may ask you to get tested in person. When travelling to either your doctor's surgery or other healthcare facility, you should:

- wear a surgical mask
- cover any exposed lesions
- travel directly to and from the testing site (e.g. your healthcare provider or pathology centre)
- inform the healthcare workers that you are a medium-risk contact of someone with mpox on arrival.

If you do not own a private vehicle or have other testing-related questions, please contact your local Public Health Unit for advice on 1300 066 055.

More information

For more information, read the NSW Health [mpox \(monkeypox\) fact sheet](#) or see the [mpox \(monkeypox\) information hub](#). You can also call your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

For free help in your language, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50.