

Monkeypox - What you need to know

What is Monkeypox(MPX)?

Monkeypox (MPX) is a viral infection caused by the monkeypox virus. The ongoing 2022 outbreak has been spreading in many countries and has infected mostly gay men and other MSM.

This wave of infections started from large gay parties or raves in Europe, and has since spread to over forty countries, including Singapore.



Symptoms of MPX start around 2 weeks from infection and include:



- Rash with blisters on body, especially around the genital area and around the anus
- Swollen lymph glands in the neck, armpits and groin
- Muscle aches
- Low energy
- Headaches
- Fever

Individuals who have contracted MPX typically recover within 2-4 weeks. However,

complications of monkeypox can happen and include secondary infections, bronchopneumonia (lung infection), sepsis (bloodstream infection), encephalitis (brain infection), and infection of the cornea with ensuing loss of vision. A small number will die from the MPX.

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Is MPX a Sexually transmitted infection(STI)? How is it transmitted?

MPX is an STI because it can be transmitted during sexual intercourse. However, it can also be transmitted in non-sexual situations. The MPX virus is transmitted through the following routes:



Skin-to-skin contact

- During sexual intercourse
- Rubbing up against others in crowded areas such as dance events, festivals



Face-to-face contact

- Respiratory droplets from kissing
- Close contact with infected persons in crowded settings

- Contact with contaminated materials (e.g., linens, bedding, electronics, clothing, sex toys) may also pose a risk of transmission



We are concerned in particular of rapid spread in certain situations



Sex-on-premises venues and sex parties

Spaces such as saunas and sex clubs where intimate physical and sexual contact occur have a higher likelihood of MPX spread.

Wearing a condom during sex can protect you from STI such as HIV, gonorrhoea, and syphilis but not from MPX. Likewise, HIV PrEP will not protect you from MPX.

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Monkeypox is NOT a 'gay disease'



MPX is not a 'gay disease' and gay and other MSM are not to be blamed or shamed for the outbreak. It can potentially infect anyone.



Stigma is counterproductive. Being infected with MPX is nothing to be ashamed of and is not associated with a specific sexual orientation.

There is nothing inherent or intrinsic to gay men that makes them more susceptible to MPX or have an increased likelihood to transmit the virus.



You can help by combatting stigma, sharing accurate information, paying attention to symptoms, and if diagnosed, by following the recommendations of your healthcare provider.

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How to reduce risk of Monkeypox (MPX)

- Learn about MPX and stay up to date on its development in the world from reputable, trustworthy sources of information (such as AfA and NCID)



- Avoid skin-to-skin or face-to-face contact with anyone who has symptoms



- Be vigilant of symptoms, especially if you have recently had physical or sexual contact with someone who may have been exposed to or infected with monkeypox



- o Check your temperature with a thermometer
- o Examine your skin, oral cavity and your genital and anal regions (using a mirror if needed) for any redness, blisters or rashes



- If you experience any of the early symptoms and signs e.g., fever, blisters around the anogenital area, tiredness, enlarged lymph nodes, you should seek medical attention at a GP, the DSC clinic or NCID

- Self-isolate and speak to a health worker if you have symptoms

- Mask up if you are in close contact with someone with symptoms

- Clean hands, objects and surfaces that have been regularly touched or handled, including sex toys, gear and clothing



Remember – stigma and ignorance will not help! Fight preconceived notions about MPX and the gay and MSM community.



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