

## **Monkeypox FAQ**

### **What is monkeypox?**

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. Cases have been reported in the United States—where it isn't usually found. Monkeypox infection can make you sick, often with flu-like symptoms and a rash that can look like pimples or blisters. Monkeypox is rarely fatal. For the general public, the current risk of getting monkeypox is low.

### **Am I at risk of getting monkeypox?**

For the general public, the current risk of getting monkeypox is low. Recent cases have been reported more frequently among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) and who may have multiple or unknown sexual partners. However, monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, personal, or skin-to-skin contact.

### **What are the symptoms of monkeypox?**

Monkeypox typically begins with symptoms like fever, headache, muscle aches, and exhaustion which appear 5 to 21 days after the individual was infected. Often within 1 to 3 days of the onset of fever, infected individuals develop a rash that can look like pimples, sores or blisters. The rash may appear on the face before spreading to other parts of the body, including the hands, feet, and genitals.

### **What should I do if I have symptoms of monkeypox?**

If you have a new or unexplained rash, sores or other symptoms of monkeypox, you should talk to your healthcare provider. If you don't have a healthcare provider or health insurance, visit the Maryland Department of Health website to find a health department near you. When you talk to the healthcare provider, remind them that the monkeypox virus may be circulating in the community. Avoid close contact with anyone, including intimate physical contact and sex, until you have talked to a healthcare provider and while you wait for test results.

### **How does monkeypox spread?**

Monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, personal, or skin-to-skin contact. This includes:

- Direct skin-to-skin contact with monkeypox rash, sores, or scabs
- Contact with materials like clothing, bedding, or towels that have been used by someone with monkeypox
- By kissing or other face-to-face contact through saliva or respiratory droplets
- A pregnant person can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta.
- The virus can spread through fluid or pus from monkeypox sores, though we don't know if the virus can be present in semen or vaginal fluids. Monkeypox has not been shown to be spread through casual contact, such as being in the same area, having casual conversation, or briefly touching shared items like doorknobs. People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

### **What can be done to prevent monkeypox?**

There are a number of ways to help prevent monkeypox infection.

- Avoid contact with any materials, such as bedding and towels, that have been in contact with a person or animal with monkeypox.
- Wash your hands or use an alcohol-based sanitizer after contact with a person or animal with monkeypox.
- Avoid contact with animals that may harbor the virus, including animals that are sick or that have been found dead, especially in areas where human monkeypox typically occurs.

- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when caring for a person with MPX

### **What treatments are available for monkeypox?**

There are no treatments specifically for monkeypox virus infection. However, since the monkeypox virus is a part of the same family of viruses as smallpox, antiviral drugs and vaccines developed to protect against smallpox may be used to prevent and treat monkeypox virus infections. A healthcare provider may recommend an antiviral, such as tecovirimat (TPOXX), for a patient who is more likely to get seriously ill—like a patient with a weakened immune system.

### **What vaccines are available for monkeypox?**

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has licensed two vaccines for use in preventing monkeypox - ACAM2000 and Jynneos. ACAM2000 is not recommended for some people. The supply of Jynneos is more limited. The federal government is managing how much vaccine is available to cities and states based on the number of monkeypox cases and other factors. A limited number of vaccine doses are available to individuals at highest risk in some U.S. jurisdictions, including Maryland. Authorized healthcare providers will offer the vaccine to eligible highest-risk individuals who meet certain criteria. This information will change as more vaccine becomes available.

### **Can wearing a condom during sex reduce the risk of monkeypox?**

Monkeypox is spread through close, personal, often skin-to-skin contact. We do not know if monkeypox is found in semen, vaginal fluid, or feces. Condoms can provide protection against sexually transmitted infection (STI), but may not prevent the spread of monkeypox. Monkeypox may be spread through sexual contact but it is not considered an STI. If you have had sex in the past 14 days and are experiencing any new symptoms, you should seek STI screening from your healthcare provider or a local health department near you.

### **What should I do if I have monkeypox?**

If a healthcare provider tells you that you have monkeypox, follow the treatment and prevention recommendations from the provider. Avoid close contact with anyone, including intimate physical contact and sex, until all sores have healed and you have a fresh layer of skin formed. You may be asked about the people you have had close, personal, or sexual contact with within the last 21 days. This is to help stop the spread of monkeypox. Can monkeypox make my pet sick? Monkeypox can spread between people and animals. However, the current risk to pets is believed to be low. People with monkeypox should avoid interacting with animals and find someone to care for their pets while they recover. You can find information about pets and monkeypox on the CDC website.

### **Where can I find more information about monkeypox in Maryland?**

For more information and resources, visit the MDH website. Follow us on social media at <http://www.twitter.com/MDHealthDept> and <https://www.facebook.com/MDHealthDept>.

### **Questions & Answers from 8/22 Monkeypox Townhall**

### **Where can a person in a high-risk group get vaccinations for monkeypox in Montgomery County?**

Montgomery County has developed a pre-registration survey to identify County residents who are interested in receiving a monkeypox/MPX vaccination AND are at risk for having been exposed to monkeypox/MPX. Anyone can get monkeypox/MPX, but with a limited vaccine supply, our priority is to protect those who may have already been exposed. Our strategy (and pre-registration) will evolve as we learn more about who most urgently needs protection from monkeypox/MPX. Appointments are based on eligibility and vaccine supply and are not guaranteed. [Click here](#) to pre-register for the vaccine,

or visit Montgomery County's [MPX website](#) for more information and to pre-register in other priority languages.

**What phone number do I need to call to ask about monkeypox/MPX and vaccines in Montgomery County?**

Because of high phone call volume, the easiest way to get an answer to your questions is by emailing [MPXinfo@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov](mailto:MPXinfo@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov). You will receive a response within one business day. If you need to speak with someone on the phone, or require assistance with the vaccine pre-registration survey, please contact either 240-777-2982 or 240-777-1755.

**I pre-registered for the monkeypox/MPX vaccine. Is there a timeframe when I might get vaccinated? Do you anticipate everyone who has pre-registered will eventually receive the vaccine?**

The County is committed to vaccinating all pre-registrants who meet criteria for vaccination. However, at this time, we unfortunately are unable to provide a timeline as to when we will be able to vaccinate all pre-registrants. This is dependent on vaccine availability from the Maryland Department of Health. The County will continue to provide regular updates to those pre-registered.

**I have submitted the pre-registration form and I have never received any response.**

If you submitted a pre-registration and did not receive an email response, please email [MPXinfo@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov](mailto:MPXinfo@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov) and you will receive a response within one business day.

**You mentioned more doses are coming out this week. I have filled out the pre-registration survey; do I need to resubmit it?**

No, you do not need to resubmit your survey. The County will be notifying individuals who pre-registered to schedule appointments when they become available.

**The number of confirmed cases of monkeypox in MD is pretty much equal to those in DC. DC has monkeypox vaccines more readily available to DC residents. What is Montgomery County doing to make vaccines available and when can county residents get the vaccine?**

- Washington, DC's government can request vaccine and receive allocation directly from the federal government. In Maryland, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) controls how much vaccine is allocated to the 23 counties across the state. Montgomery County thus receives our allocation from the Maryland Department of Health (MDH).
- In Washington, DC, there have been 402 cases of MPX reported to date. 413 have been reported statewide in Maryland, with only a proportion occurring in Montgomery County.
- In June, we received 50 doses of vaccine from MDH. With this small initial supply, we were only able to vaccinate those who were likely exposed or had confirmed exposure to MPX or individuals who had likely already been exposed to MPX or were known close contacts of those diagnosed with MPX as reported by MDH. This strategy is called *post-exposure prophylaxis*, or PEP, because it involves vaccinating only those who have likely already been exposed. During this initial period, we also received referrals for vaccinations through case identification from MDH and community/healthcare providers.
- In anticipation of more doses from MDH, the County created an MPX vaccine pre-registration form intended for residents who had potential MPX exposures, and who were likeliest to contract MPX based on the available epidemiological data from CDC. We also collected behavioral and demographic information on this form to ensure that as vaccine supply increases, we are equitably distributing vaccine to our community. (Access the form online at [TinyURL.com/MoCoMPX](https://tinyurl.com/MoCoMPX))

- As we receive more supply, the County will move from a post-exposure prophylaxis vaccine strategy to a *pre-exposure prophylaxis* (PrEP) strategy, in which we will be able to vaccinate those who have not yet, but are likely to be, exposed to MPX through known routes of exposures in specific communities and networks where MPX is more prevalent.
- On July 6, 2022, we received 200 doses from MDH specifically allotted for larger Maryland counties (Montgomery, Prince George's and Baltimore).
- On July 28, 2022 we received another 600 doses, bringing our latest total to 850 doses.
- On Wednesday, August 24, the County implemented revised federal and state guidance to transition from a 2-dose subcutaneous regimen of JYNNEOS (given 28 days apart), to a smaller dose of JYNNEOS given intradermally in 2 doses, also 28 days apart. This will allow us to expand our supply substantially and vaccinate a much larger proportion of
  - As of today, we have approximately 2800 people pre-registered for MPX vaccine in Montgomery County, and we have vaccinated 450 people.
  - We have been continuing to advocate for more doses, both to MDH directly and through Congressman Raskin's office. County Council has repeatedly called on Governor Hogan to release more vaccines to Montgomery County. Last week, we asked for 2000 additional doses.

**Has there been any talk of D.C. sharing its vaccines, maybe making it so a residency requirement is expanded to people in neighboring counties?**

Individuals who live, work or study in Washington DC are now eligible to pre-register for vaccination in the district. We encourage you to review DC's [eligibility criteria](#), which include the following groups:

- All people, of any sexual orientation or gender, who have had multiple sexual partners in the past 2 weeks, including those currently considered highest risk: gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, transgender men, and transgender women; or
- Sex workers (of any sexual orientation or gender); or
- Staff (of any sexual orientation or gender) at establishments where sexual activity occurs (e.g., bathhouses, saunas, sex clubs)

If you are interested in pre-registering for vaccination in DC, you can fill out the form at this [link](#).

**DC has a breakdown of monkeypox cases on their site and number of people vaccinated. When will we know how many Montgomery County residents have been diagnosed with monkeypox and how many have been vaccinated?**

Montgomery County Public Health Services is currently working on a monkeypox community dashboard that will include information about MPX cases in our county. We are working to obtain access to all the data we need from MDH and hope to have it on our website by next week.

**Will educational information and vaccine pre-registration links for MPX be proactively shared through dating/hookup apps like for COVID?**

Yes! In the coming weeks, the County's Do It For You, MC campaign plans to launch social media and other digital ads on various platforms including dating/hookup apps/sites. In the interim, follow @DoltForMC on Instagram, @DoltForYouMC on Facebook and Twitter for updates, or [click here](#) to subscribe to our newsletter.

**How can I get my uninsured, low income or homeless patients testing or treatment for Monkeypox?**

The first step is to have the patient screened and evaluated to determine if they need to be tested, and if positive, a provider would decide if treatment is appropriate. Urgent care centers have the ability to order testing, and if someone is uninsured, providers can call Disease Control at 240-777-1755. Because

TPOXX is held at national stockpile, there is no cost associated with it, but the process of obtaining it is complex and it requires informed consent from the patient. Providers looking for information about how to obtain TPOXX should visit the [CDC's TPOXX website](#) created for this purpose.

**What can be done to increase vaccine equity in MoCo and how can we increase our supply? What have we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and response?**

The County is using multiple strategies to ensure vaccine equity, many of which we honed during the COVID-19 pandemic: zip code analysis, geo-mapping, using demographic data (such as race, ethnicity, age, sex at birth, and gender) to learn about where vaccine is needed most, and using a “ring strategy” to vaccinate the most vulnerable first, while we have limited supply. MDH is still managing monkeypox/MPX data because it’s a much smaller data set than COVID and there are privacy concerns. We will continue with targeted educational sessions and town hall meetings in high-risk groups, as well as engaging in continuous advocacy at the state and federal level to increase supply.

**Is the county considering adopting intradermal vaccination to increase vaccine availability?**

Effective Wednesday, August 24, the County is following revised federal and state guidance to transition from a 2-dose subcutaneous regimen of JYNNEOS (given 28 days apart), to a smaller dose of JYNNEOS given intradermally in 2 doses, also 28 days apart.

**When will private healthcare providers, pharmacies or others be authorized to offer this vaccine?**

We believe that private providers will eventually have access to vaccine as national supply increases. There is no timeline for rollout of vaccine to private providers in Montgomery County or elsewhere in Maryland. It is not currently clear the extent to which pharmacies or other kinds of healthcare institutions will be involved in vaccine rollout. When we receive information about this, we will update providers and the community.

**In case I were to be sick, where can one go to an LGBT care provider that can help? My doctor is not LGBT specialized and I would not want to experience indifference.**

Montgomery County’s Dennis Avenue Health Center, CCI and Mary’s Center all have staff trained in LGBTQ+ cultural sensitivity.

**How can LGBTQ persons generally, reduce their likelihood of contracting/transmitting the Monkeypox?**

Avoid close contact with people who have been diagnosed recently with MPX, sharing bedding, toys, eating utensils, wash hands frequently with soap and water. Avoid prolonged, close physical contact. Parties, clubs, saunas, back rooms where there’s anonymous contact with minimal clothing where there is direct skin-to-skin contact. Healthcare providers should use personal protection equipment (PPE) with patients who have confirmed or suspected MPX.

**Are trans gay men eligible to receive the monkeypox vaccine?**

Yes, trans men are absolutely eligible to receive the MPX vaccine as long as they meet other eligibility criteria.

**Of the doses that the County has received, how many have been administered?**

Approximately 450 doses have been administered and there are several appointments scheduled over the next few weeks; administered doses are primarily first doses and we are now starting to provide second doses of the two-dose regimen; in summary, we have administered and have accounted for

approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of vaccine that we have on hand, with full-day vaccine clinics scheduled into the coming weeks.

**How will the personal information collected on the pre-registration form be used in the future?**

The information is used by public health services is used to help us determine who is highest risk, and how much vaccine is needed. This information is considered confidential personal health information and is held compliance with HIPAA.

**Are there local real time MPX case reporting and seroprevalence studies underway?**

All lab confirmed cases of MPX are reported to the Maryland Department of Health in real time. At this time, county level data has not yet been published by the Department of Health. In the United States, the CDC in partnership with the San Francisco Department of Public Health began a seroprevalence survey on June 27th. There are additional seroprevalence surveys underway in other countries. The CDC has published and regularly updates a US map with Monkeypox case count [here](#).

**How can/should messages be delivered to the LGBTQ+ community and those serving the community - particularly health professionals - in a way that doesn't imply that all men, for example, are sexually promiscuous? Many of the messages I've seen in the DMV are encouraging people to get vaccinated but the criteria - to date - don't (generally) allow people who are not sexually active but are gay, for example, to get the vaccine.**

In 2021, the County developed an LGBTQ+ inclusive, sex positive sexual health campaign, "Do it For You, Montgomery County" and we are incorporating MPX messaging into that campaign in addition to getting the word out about MPX more generally. You can follow us at @DoltForMC on Instagram, or @DoltForYouMC on Facebook and Twitter for updates, or [click here](#) to subscribe to our newsletter. It's important to de-stigmatize sexual health conversations for everyone so that people get the care they need. We're clear that LGBTQ+ communities are less likely to see themselves in health campaigns and are very likely to experience discrimination across the healthcare spectrum, so we seek to promote visibility in all our messaging. As we learn more about MPX transmission, we'll continue to be mindful of stigma and discrimination in messaging but will always center LGBTQ+ health and wellness because it matters in and of itself.

**Has the County attempted to address the homophobic and racist media coverage blaming the spread on African American and LGBTQIA+ communities?**

Anyone can get monkeypox, but [according to the CDC](#), LGBTQ+ communities, especially LGBTQ+ communities of color, are disproportionately impacted by this epidemic currently. While we cannot prevent the media from weaving racism, homophobia and transphobia into their narratives about health concerns, we can have conversations like this Town Hall to face and dispel dangerous myths and stigmatizing stereotypes. We will continue to listen to our most impacted communities and work alongside them to ensure that our entire strategy, including messaging, is rooted in equity and transparency.

**If one received a 1st dose of the Jynneos vaccine and is then infected by monkeypox, are their symptoms lessened? If I get Monkeypox between my first dose of the vaccine and second, should I still get the second dose?**

Having the first dose will mitigate extent of infection and how bad symptoms are; for the average person there is no benefit to getting a second vaccine.

**What are the risks of transmission for aquatic exercise classes in public pools?**

You cannot get monkeypox just by being in a swimming pool. However, if you are in close physical contact with someone who has monkeypox lesions, or if you use their unwashed towel you could become infected.

**How do I isolate with Monkeypox?**

Cover body parts and wear well-fitting masks; common disinfectants can be used to disinfect surfaces. Isolate in your own home if possible until all lesions have crusted over and until the scab has fallen off.

**So, non-visible viral shedding isn't really common? We should be more aware of active and visible lesions?**

It is currently thought that only those with symptoms can transmit monkey pox. This includes transmission during the prodromal phase (with fever, exhaustion, muscle aches, etc.) that some people get prior to developing lesions.

**How long does immunity last from both a case of monkey pox and the vaccine?**

We don't know exactly how long immunity lasts. As we learn more, we will share this information with Montgomery County residents.

**As a precaution should we avoid handshakes and fists bumping?**

For those who are risk averse, they could avoid handshakes to decrease the risk of many types of infections, and compared to full handshakes, fist bumps are comparatively less likely to transmit pathogens. Hand washing and hand sanitizer are effective tools to decrease risk of infections.

**Is there a blood antibody test available to check if I was exposed in the past and developed antibodies (protection) against MPX?**

Antibody testing is currently not being done. It would not be able to tell the difference between vaccination and prior infection.

**Regarding intradermal injection: any risk of local skin necrosis vs the sub-q route? It's only been one study for the intradermal. What happens if the solution gets into the sub-q space rather than dermis then is it 20% effective because it's 1/5 the dose. Intradermal injections are more difficult than subcutaneous.**

Training on intradermal administration of JYNNEOS has been provided to all vaccinators at Montgomery County. Montgomery County is required by the Maryland Department of Health to utilize this

**Can someone get immunity from monkey pox if not vaccinate or have gotten it?**

Yes, monkey pox infection is thought to confer immunity. The duration of immunity is not currently known.

**If you have had a smallpox vaccine in your youth, do you have any protection from monkey pox virus?**

We don't know the answer to that question. There is probably a small degree of protection but not sufficient to prevent disease.

**What if someone start developing early symptoms while waiting for the vaccine, or find out that they were recently exposed, would they get priority for vaccinations? How do they update their current request for the vaccine?**

Montgomery County is prioritizing vaccination for asymptomatic individuals who have been exposed to monkeypox, as vaccination 4-14 days after exposure can lessen symptoms and prevent illness. At this time, vaccination is not recommended for individuals experiencing symptoms consistent with monkeypox infection. If an individual is experiencing symptoms consistent with monkeypox infection or has had a confirmed case of monkeypox, they are no longer eligible for vaccination as the vaccine is not believed to confer any additional benefits. If you believe that you may have monkeypox, we encourage you to contact either your primary care physician or one of the County's emergency or urgent care centers for testing. For additional information concerning vaccination in special populations, please refer to the [CDC](#).

To update a request for vaccination, individuals can reach out to us by email to [MPXinfo@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:MPXinfo@montgomerycountymd.gov) and inform us of any changes to their original registration. Individuals may also notify us in case they no longer are interested in receiving a vaccine from Montgomery County.

**How does testing work? Does someone have to have symptoms?**

No testing is currently available until a person has symptoms. Testing involves swabbing lesions (two swabs per lesion to get best sample). Swabbing can be uncomfortable for the patient because the provider may apply pressure in order to get a sufficient sample. Those samples are securely sent to a lab for testing. Result times vary by laboratory.

**There is evidence Monkeypox is an STI. Do condoms help stop the spread?**

There is a lot of discussion in the scientific community about whether MPX is an STI. Condom use during sex may protect against proctitis from lesions in the anus. It won't protect from lesions in other places skin-to-skin contact is occurring, but it may potentially reduce one of the more potentially painful symptoms of MPX.

**How can providers get TPOXX (treatment) for their patients?**

Per the CDC, there is no treatment approved specifically for monkeypox virus infections. However, there is evidence that antivirals developed for use in patients with smallpox may help patients with monkeypox. Tecovirimat (known as TPOXX) is currently available through the US Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) a treatment option for some monkeypox patients. Healthcare providers hoping to obtain TPOXX for a patient diagnosed with monkeypox should visit CDC's [Obtaining and Using TPOXX](#) webpage and follow the instructions there for accessing this medication from the SNS.

**If spread continues, will there be a consideration to offer vaccine to front line health care providers? They were prioritized for Covid vaccination.**

Currently, vaccination is being offered to health care providers who have been exposed. As we receive more supply, healthcare providers who are likely to be exposed to MPX may receive pre-exposure prophylaxis vaccination.

**Has the department considered using its existing list of residents on the MoCo PrEP Program as an identifier of the MPX at-risk population?**

Patients of Montgomery County's HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) program who were eligible for the MPX vaccine were invited to pre-register for the vaccine and will receive access with the same eligibility considerations as others who are pre-registered.



Montgomery County operates our HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) program out of Dennis Avenue Health Center (2000 Dennis Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20902). For more information about enrolling in our free PrEP program, call 240-777-1760 or visit [DoltForYouMC.org](http://DoltForYouMC.org).