

Barwon South West Public Health Unit

Fact sheet - Monkeypox

WHAT IS MONKEYPOX?

Monkeypox is a disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus.

It is contagious and is usually spread from person-to-person through direct skin-to-skin contact. It can also be transmitted through contact with infected surfaces or items, and rarely through respiratory droplets. Transmission usually occurs during prolonged, very close contact with an infected individual.



WHAT DO PEOPLE NEED TO WATCH OUT FOR?

Monkeypox usually presents with a rash that can occur anywhere on the body. In the current outbreak, the rash often occurs in the genital or anal regions. Some people develop proctitis (e.g. rectal pain and/or bleeding, diarrhoea) or urethritis (e.g. painful or frequent urination).

The rash changes and goes through different stages similar to chickenpox, before finally becoming a scab that falls off.

Other symptoms of monkeypox include fever, chills, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, and exhaustion. These can start before, at the same time as, or after the rash.

Symptoms usually resolve themselves within a few weeks.



WHO IS AT RISK?

Monkeypox can affect anyone who comes into prolonged contact with someone with monkeypox, however the current outbreak has disproportionately impacted men who have sex with men.



WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION?

LOCALLY: There is currently local transmission of monkeypox occurring in Victoria.

The Department of Health is conducting active monitoring of cases and contacts to prevent further spread in the community.

GLOBALLY: The World Health Organization has activated its highest alert level for monkeypox, declaring the virus a public health emergency of international concern. This means it now views the outbreak as a significant enough threat to global health that a coordinated international response is needed to prevent the virus from spreading further and potentially escalating into a pandemic.

As of 31 August, there have been over 50,000 cases in 92 countries (including Australia) that have not historically reported monkeypox. In Australia, as of 30 August there have been 121 confirmed and probable cases.

The Australian Chief Medical Officer has declared monkeypox to be a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance.



IS THERE A VACCINE?

Yes. Victoria has received a small initial allocation of the third-generation Jynneos vaccine in early August. We expect to receive further doses in October, and then more again in early 2023.

The Commonwealth Government has secured 450,000 doses of this vaccine, and the Victorian Government is continuing to work with them and other states and territories on a coordinated response to monkeypox.



WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE VACCINE?

In Victoria, vaccination is currently recommended for the following priority groups:

- Post exposure prophylaxis for high-risk close contacts of monkeypox cases (within 4 days)
- Laboratory workers who analyse specimens from monkeypox cases
- Sexually active HIV positive gay, bisexual, and other men,trans people or non-binary people assigned male at birth who have sex with men (including cis and trans men)
 - With an STI in the last 12 months OR
 - Will be travelling to North America or Europe before 31 October* OR
 - Who attend sex on premises venues including saunas, adult cinemas/lounges, beats and sex parties.
- Sexually active HIV negative gay, bisexual, and other men,trans people or non-binary people assigned male at birth who have sex with men (including cis and trans men)
 - With an STI in the last 12 months OR
 - Will be travelling to North America or Europe before 31 October* OR
 - Who attend sex on premises venues including saunas, adult cinemas/lounges, beats and sex parties.
- Sexually active gay, bisexual, and other men, trans people or non-binary people assigned male at birth who have sex with men (including cis and trans men) who are homeless, or have significant drug use or psychiatric illness
- Sex workers who engage in sex with the sexually active groups listed above.



WHERE CAN ELIGIBLE PEOPLE GET A VACCINE?

The Barwon South West Public Health Unit (BSWPHU) has received a small allocation of vaccines. People who meet currently eligibility criteria can contact the Public Health Unit to register their interest in receiving a monkeypox vaccine.

A number of sexual health clinics in Melbourne are also offering vaccination to existing clients, and a small number of public hospitals in Melbourne are offering vaccination to high risk individuals.

For more information, please visit www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/monkeypox



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I MAY HAVE MONKEYPOX?

Contact your GP. If you are unable to contact your GP contact your local sexual health clinic.

If you can't be seen by your local doctor and have concerning symptoms such as increasing pain, go to your local Emergency Department and inform them you think you may be at risk of monkeypox. For more information contact the Barwon South West Public Health Unit.



CONTACT

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