

## Frequently Asked Questions about Monkeypox

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Have you seen Monkeypox in the news? Last month, several countries reported outbreaks.\* The Public Health Agency of Canada confirmed the first cases of Monkeypox in Canada on May 19, 2022.\* At the time of writing, Canada has 58 confirmed cases: 52 in Quebec, 5 in Ontario, and 1 in Alberta.\*

The best thing we can do right now is to learn more about the virus so, if we suspect we have it, we can get it checked out and lower the risk of spreading it to others without knowing.\*

#### **Question 1: What is Monkeypox?**

Monkeypox is a disease caused by the Monkeypox virus.\* It can spread from animals to humans, and it can also spread between people.\*

#### **Question 2: How does Monkeypox spread from animals to humans?**

It can spread to humans if they touch an infected animal. Rodents and primates often carry the disease.\* You can lower your risk of infection by avoiding unprotected contact with wild animals, especially those that are sick or dead (including their meat and blood).\*

#### **Question 3: How does Monkeypox spread between humans? How can I avoid it?**

Even though person to person spread of Monkeypox is uncommon,\* you can catch it if you have close physical contact with someone who has symptoms.\*

We know that people with symptoms can infect others, but we don't know if asymptomatic people can spread the virus.\* Rashes, bodily fluids (such as fluid, pus or blood from skin lesions) and scabs are especially infectious.\* Ulcers, lesions or sores in the mouth can also be infectious, meaning the virus can spread through saliva.\* People who closely interact with someone who is infectious are at greater risk for infection.\* It can also spread from someone who is pregnant to the foetus from the placenta, or from an infected parent to child during or after birth through skin-to-skin contact.\*

Clothing, bedding, towels or objects (like eating utensils/dishes) that have been contaminated with the virus can also infect others.\* Just like COVID-19, and many other diseases that are spread through close contact, you can lower your risk of infection by maintaining physical distance, frequent hand washing, and wearing a mask.”\*

#### **Question 4: What are the symptoms of Monkeypox?**

The risk for Monkeypox is still considered low, but anyone who is concerned about their symptoms should self-isolate and contact a healthcare professional right away.\* Do this even when you don't know if you've been in close contact with someone who may have Monkeypox.\* But if you know that you have been, be sure to tell the healthcare professional who you contacted!\*

Common symptoms:

- Fever\*
- Chills\*
- Headache\*
- Muscle aches and pains\*
- Fatigue\*
- Swollen lymph nodes (e.g., in the neck and groin)\*
- Rash (can be on your face, arms, palms of the hands, legs, and/or soles of the feet)\*
- Mucous membranes (can be on your mouth and/or genitals) that follows 1 to 3 days after your other symptoms\*

Symptoms usually start to show between 6 to 13 days after you were infected, but it can range from anywhere between 5 to 21 days.\* Symptoms typically last between 2 to 4 weeks and go away on their own without treatment.\*

Severe cases can happen for children and people with compromised immune systems.\* Severe symptoms include: pneumonia, sepsis, brain inflammation, and vision loss.\*

#### **Question 5: Can people die from Monkeypox? Is it the same as smallpox?**

Monkeypox can look like smallpox, but it's not the same.\* Monkeypox is much less fatal and less easily spread.\* About 30% of people with smallpox died.\* In recent years, only around 3–6% of reported Monkeypox cases have led to death.\* However, that number might not be accurate because there is limited surveillance in the countries where Monkeypox is usually found, which is Central and Western Africa.\*

#### **Question 6: Do vaccines against smallpox work on Monkeypox?**

Several studies found that being vaccinated against smallpox was about 85% effective in preventing monkeypox, and it may result in milder illness.\* At the moment, the original smallpox vaccines are no longer available to the general public.\*

Smallpox was declared to have been eradicated worldwide in 1980.\* Smallpox no longer occurs naturally, but the global health sector remains vigilant in case it reappears.\* Some laboratory personnel or health workers may have received a more recent smallpox vaccine to protect them in case they are exposed to orthopoxviruses in the workplace.\* Newer vaccines, diagnostics, and antiviral agents for smallpox have been in the process of being developed, and these may also prevent and control Monkeypox.\*

### **Question 7: Is there a vaccine for Monkeypox?**

There is currently no specific vaccine or treatment available for Monkeypox.\* However, there is a newly-developed smallpox vaccine called Imvamune®, which Health Canada authorized in 2020 to vaccinate against smallpox, Monkeypox, and similar diseases in adults 18 years of age and older at high risk of exposure.\* Imvamune® is only a vaccine for prevention and does not treat the virus.\* Next week's featured article will explain this vaccine in more detail. If you are eager to learn more about it before then, click [here](#).

### **Question 8: Are there any therapeutic treatment options for Monkeypox?**

An antiviral agent known as Tecovirimat was recently developed for smallpox, and the European Medicines Agency licensed it to be used for Monkeypox in 2022 based on data in animal and human studies.\* It is not widely available yet.\*

In Canada, Tecovirimat (TPoxx®) is authorized by Health Canada to treat smallpox in adults and pediatric patients weighing at least 13 kg in extraordinary circumstances.\* The drug is not approved to treat monkeypox in Canada.\* However, a licensed healthcare professional may use their clinical judgment to prescribe TPoxx® off-label for the treatment of severe Monkeypox infections.\* This involves taking three capsules/pills twice a day for 14 days.\*

### **Final Thoughts**

Around the world and within Canada, Monkeypox is being investigated on an ongoing basis, and what we know about it is constantly evolving.\* The Public Health Agency of Canada will continue to provide updates to the public as new information becomes available.\*

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If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, take the self-assessment at [www.ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus). Follow all directions from your medical provider or your local health unit at the following phone numbers:

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

Toronto Public Health: 416-338-7600

Peel Public Health: 905-799-7700

Durham Region Health Department: 905-668-7711

York Region Public Health: 1-877-464-9675