

# Social Gatherings, Safer Sex and Monkeypox

Monkeypox is a disease caused by a virus (monkeypox virus) not commonly seen in the United States. Monkeypox can cause a rash which may look like pimples or blisters, sometimes with a flu-like illness. While CDC works to contain the current outbreak and learn more about the virus, it is important that you have information so you can make informed choices when you are in spaces or situations where monkeypox could be spread. As new information becomes available, CDC will continue to update the CDC monkeypox website to help keep you informed.

## How is monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, personal, often skin-to-skin contact including:

- Direct contact with monkeypox rash, scabs, or body fluids from a person with monkeypox. We believe this is currently the most common way that monkeypox is spreading in the U.S.
- Touching objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding, or towels), and surfaces that have been used by someone with monkeypox.
- Contact with respiratory secretions.

This contact can happen during intimate contact including:

- Oral, anal, and vaginal sex or touching the genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina) or anus (butthole) of a person with monkeypox.
- Hugging, massage, and kissing.
- Prolonged face-to-face contact.
- Touching fabrics and objects during sex that were used by a person with monkeypox and that have not been disinfected, such as bedding, towels, fetish gear, and sex toys.

## What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

- You may experience all or only a few of the symptoms of monkeypox.
- Most people with monkeypox will get a rash. Some people have developed a rash before (or without) flu-like symptoms.
- Monkeypox symptoms usually start within 3 weeks of exposure to the virus.
  - The flu-like symptoms may include fever, headache, muscle aches and backache, sore throat, cough, swollen lymph nodes, chills, or exhaustion.
  - If someone has flu-like symptoms, they will usually develop a rash 1-4 days later.
- The rash may be located on or near the genitals or anus but could also be on other areas like the hands, feet, chest, or face.
  - The rash will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing.
  - The rash can look like pimples or blisters and may be painful or itchy.
  - The rash may also be inside the body, including the mouth, vagina, or anus.



Monkeypox can be spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of skin has formed. This can take several weeks.

## What are researchers investigating?

- If the virus can be spread when someone has no symptoms
- If the virus could be present in semen (cum), vaginal fluids, and fecal matter (poop)
- How effective the current smallpox vaccines are for the prevention of monkeypox illness



## How can a person lower the chance of getting monkeypox at places like raves, parties, clubs, and festivals?

When thinking about what to do, seek out information from trusted sources like the local health department. Second, consider how much close, personal, skin-to-skin contact is likely to occur at the event you plan to attend. If you feel sick or have a rash, do not attend any gathering, and see a healthcare provider.



- Festivals, events, and concerts where attendees are fully clothed and unlikely to share skin-to-skin contact are safer. However, attendees should be mindful of activities (like kissing) that might spread monkeypox.
- A rave, party, or club where there is minimal clothing and where there is direct, personal, often skin-to-skin contact has some risk. Avoid any rash you see on others and consider minimizing skin-to-skin contact.
- Enclosed spaces, such as back rooms, saunas, sex clubs, or private and public sex parties where intimate, often anonymous sexual contact with multiple partners occurs, may have a higher likelihood of spreading monkeypox.

## How can a person lower their risk during sex?

Talk to your partner about any recent illness and be aware of new or unexplained rash on your body or your partner's body, including the genitals and anus. If you or your partner have recently been sick, currently feel sick, or have a new or an unexplained rash, do not have sex and see a healthcare provider.

If you or a partner has monkeypox, the best way to protect yourself and others is to avoid sex of any kind (oral, anal, vaginal) and do not kiss or touch each other's bodies while you are sick, especially any rash. Do not share things like towels, fetish gear, sex toys, and toothbrushes.

If you or your partner have (or think you might have) monkeypox and you decide to have sex, consider the following to reduce the chance of spreading the virus:

- Have virtual sex with no in-person contact.
- Masturbate together at a distance of at least 6 feet, without touching each other and without touching any rash.
- Consider having sex with your clothes on or covering areas where rash is present, reducing as much skin-to-skin contact as possible. If the rash is confined to the genitals or anus, condoms may help; however, condoms alone are likely not enough to prevent monkeypox.
- Avoid kissing.
- Remember to wash your hands, fetish gear, sex toys and any fabrics (bedding, towels, clothing) after having sex.
- Having multiple or anonymous sex partners may increase your chances of exposure to monkeypox. Limiting your number of sex partners may reduce the possibility of exposure.
- Avoid touching the rash. Touching the rash can spread it to other parts of the body and may delay healing.

## What should a person do if they have a new or unexplained rash or other symptoms?

- Avoid sex or being intimate with anyone until you have been checked out by a healthcare provider.
- If you don't have a provider or health insurance, visit a public health clinic near you.
- When you see a healthcare provider, wear a mask, and remind them that this virus is circulating in the area.
- Avoid gatherings, especially if they involve close, personal, skin-to-skin contact.
- Think about the people you have had close, personal, or sexual contact during the last 21 days, including people you met through dating apps. To help stop the spread, you might be asked to share this information if you have received a monkeypox diagnosis.

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/monkeypox](http://www.cdc.gov/monkeypox)