WHAT IS MPOX/MONKEYPOX?

Mpox/Monkeypox is caused by the virus “orthopoxvirus simae” (also called MPXV). Most people experience a mild course of disease, which usually heals on its own. However, in some cases, a severe disease course may occur (especially in children or individuals with a weakened immune system).

HOW IS MPOX/MONKEYPOX PASSED ON TO OTHERS?

- Close skin-to-skin contact during sex or close hugging, massages, or kissing a person with mpox/monkeypox, especially in case of contact with the rash, sores or scabs
- Contact with objects used during sex (e.g. sex toys)
- Contact with fabrics (e.g. clothing, bedding or towels) and surfaces that have been used or touched by a person with mpox/monkeypox
- Contact with droplets when having close face-to-face conversations

People with mpox/monkeypox can pass on the virus to others as soon as they have symptoms. Close skin-to-skin contact is currently thought to be the main way that the infection is passed on to others.

Only once all changes to the skin, including the scabs, have healed and a new layer of skin is formed, there is no further risk of passing on the infection. This may take several weeks.

MPOX/MONKEYPOX SYMPTOMS

- Symptoms typically occur within 4 to 21 days after contact with a person with mpox/monkeypox. In the current outbreak, shorter incubation periods of 1 to 3 days have also been observed in some cases.

Changes to the skin
- A rash that can look like pimples, sores or blisters in the genital or anal area,
- and it can also appear in other areas, such as the hands, feet, chest, face or mouth.
- The skin lesions can be very painful.
- Mpox/Monkeypox is often preceded or accompanied by general signs and symptoms of illness.

General signs and symptoms of illness
- Fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain,
- swollen lymph nodes,
- chills or fatigue.

However, some people do not experience general signs and symptoms of illness.

For images of typical skin lesions see: www.rki.de/mpox-bilder
REDUCING RISK OF INFECTION...

... WHEN HAVING SEX

▷ You can lower your risk of getting infected with mpox/monkeypox through reducing your number of sexual partners.

▷ Condoms can reduce the risk of infection by preventing direct contact especially with mucosal lesions in the anus or vagina. Evidence suggests that the virus might also be present in the semen. However, condoms do not protect against transmission if you come in contact with changes to the skin on other parts of the body.

▷ If you or your partner has mpox/monkeypox, you should avoid having sex of any kind (oral, anal, vaginal) as well as touching and kissing.

▷ After recovery from mpox/monkeypox and once all changes to your skin have completely healed, you should use condoms during sex for a period of eight weeks since the virus could still be present in the semen for some time.

... AT PARTIES, CLUBS OR FESTIVALS

▷ The likelihood of passing on mpox/monkeypox is strongly increased through sexual contact. This can also apply to places such as darkrooms, saunas or sex clubs, where people often wear little or no clothing.

▷ There can also be an increased risk of infection at festivals, parties, events or clubs, where often little clothing is worn and where direct skin contact frequently happens.

▷ You should not touch rashes, blisters or sores and you should minimize skin-to-skin contact.

VACCINATING AGAINST MPOX/MONKEYPOX

− A smallpox vaccine has been approved in the EU, which can also be used for protection against mpox/monkeypox.

− The vaccination protects best, if given as a preventive measure.

− Even after a contact with a person with mpox/monkeypox, vaccination soon after can reduce the risk of becoming sick. This so-called post-exposure vaccination should ideally be administered within four days after the contact took place.

− For further information, please contact your health care provider.

− Information on vaccination: www.rki.de/mpox-impfung (in German).

WHAT TO DO ...

... IF YOU SUSPECT HAVING CONTRACTED MPOX/MONKEYPOX?

▷ If you feel sick, watch out for sores, blisters or rashes on the body, including the area of your genitals and anus.

▷ Until you know your diagnosis, avoid meeting other people, especially if this involves close skin contact.

▷ Avoid having sex and see a health care provider (general practitioner, HIV specialist, dermatologist or a local public health authorities’ HIV/STI test center). Before your visit, inform them by phone that you think you might have a mpox/monkeypox infection.

... IF YOU OR YOUR PARTNER ARE INFECTED WITH MPOX/MONKEYPOX?

▷ Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and water.

▷ Stay in isolation and avoid close body contact until scabs and crusts have healed completely and have fallen off and no new changes to your skin appear – at least for a minimum of 21 days.

▷ Look out for symptoms and regularly check your skin, including areas that are not easily visible.

▷ Avoid contact with pets, as it might be possible that they can also get infected with the mpox/monkeypox virus.

▷ Inform people, with whom you have had close physical contact since the start of your symptoms that they may be at risk of being exposed to mpox/monkeypox.

▷ For further information, see the leaflet “Home-based Isolation for Confirmed Mpox/Monkeypox Infection”: www.rki.de/mpox-isolierung (in German)

FURTHER INFORMATION

ROBERT KOCHELN-INSTITUT
www.rki.de/mpox
www.rki.de/mpox-kontaktpersonen
www.rki.de/mpox-isolierung
www.rki.de/desinfektion

FEDERAL CENTRE FOR HEALTH EDUCATION
https://bzga-k.de/mpox

GERMAN AIDS SERVICE ORGANIZATION
www.aidshilfe.de/affenpocken

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