WHAT IS MONKEYPOX?

Monkeypox is caused by the monkeypox virus (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 MONKEYPOX PASSED ON TO OTHERS?

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

People with 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.

MONKEYPOX SYMPTOMS

- Symptoms can occur within 5 to 21 days after contact with a person with monkeypox. Based on current data, shorter incubation times of 2 to 4 days seem possible 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.
- 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 with monkeypox do not experience any general signs and symptoms of illness.

For images of typical monkeypox changes to the skin see: www.rki.de/affenpocken-bilder

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REDUCING THE RISK OF INFECTION ...

... WHEN HAVING SEX.
▶ You can reduce your risk of getting infected with monkeypox through reducing your number of sexual partners.
▶ Condoms protect against HIV, but not against monkeypox, because changes to the skin can occur on all areas of the body.
▶ If you or your partner have monkeypox, you should avoid having sex of any kind (oral, anal, vaginal) as well as avoid touching and kissing.
▶ After recovery from 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 monkeypox virus could still be present in the semen for some time.

... AT PARTIES, CLUBS OR FESTIVALS.
▶ The likelihood of passing on 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 the rashes, blisters or sores and you should minimize skin-to-skin contact.

WHAT TO DO ...

... IF YOU SUSPECT YOU HAVE CONTRACTED MONKEYPOX?
▶ If you feel sick, watch out for sores, blisters or rashes on the body, including around your genital area or anus.
▶ Until you have been diagnosed, 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 monkeypox infection.

... IF YOU OR YOUR PARTNER ARE INFECTED WITH 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 they may also be able to get infected with the 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 having been exposed to monkeypox.
▶ For further information, see the leaflet "Home-based Isolation for Confirmed Monkeypox Infection": www.rki.de/affenpocken-isolierung (in German)

FURTHER INFORMATION

ROBERT KOCH-INSTITUT
www.rki.de/affenpocken
www.rki.de/affenpocken-kontaktpersonen
www.rki.de/affenpocken-isolierung
www.rki.de/desinfektion

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

GERMAN AIDS SERVICE ORGANIZATION
www.aidshilfe.de/affenpocken

VACCINATION AGAINST MONKEYPOX
- A smallpox vaccine has been approved in the EU, which can also be used for protection against monkeypox.
- The vaccination is most effective if given as a preventive measure.
- Even after contact with a person with 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 monkeypox vaccination: www.rki.de/affenpocken-impfung (in German).

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