
Symptoms and Treatment

What is mpox?

Mpox, also called monkeypox, is a disease caused by infection with the *Monkeypox virus*. Mpox disease is similar to smallpox but is milder and less likely to cause death.

What are the symptoms of mpox?

The most obvious symptom of mpox is a blister-like rash that may appear on the face, inside the mouth, and on the hands, feet, chest, [genitals](#), or [anus](#). The rash goes through stages (first blisters, then scabs) before new skin forms. Mpox may also make you feel like you have the flu and cause

- fever
- headache
- muscle aches
- chills
- swollen lymph nodes
- sore throat, nasal congestion, or cough

How long does it take for mpox symptoms to start?

It takes about 3 weeks for symptoms to start after a person has been in contact with the

virus.

How long does mpox last?

People with mpox can be sick for up to 4 weeks. For some people, a rash is the only symptom. For other people, a rash may come first and then flu-like symptoms.

What is the treatment for mpox?

There is a medication that helps the body fight the virus. It's called antiviral medication and is given most often to people who have weaker immune systems. Most people recover from mpox within 2 to 4 weeks even without treatment. Talk with your health care professional if you have symptoms or know you have had contact with someone who has mpox.

How It Spreads

Who can get mpox?

Anyone can get mpox from close contact with another person who has the disease.

How does the virus spread from person to person?

The virus can spread from one person to another through

- contact with rash, blisters, scabs, or body fluids
- contact with saliva or mucus from face-to-face contact (like kissing)
- other close, physical contact (like cuddling or sex)
- touching clothes, towels, or bedsheets that were touched by the rash or body fluids of a person with mpox

How do I know if I can pass the virus to other people?

The virus can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed. A rash is healed when scabs have fallen off and new skin has formed where the blisters were.

Are there other ways to get mpox?

Yes, it's possible to get mpox from infected animals through scratches or bites, or by eating parts of an infected animal.

Vaccination

Is there a vaccine for mpox?

Yes, there are two different [vaccines](#) to help prevent mpox.

- **Single-dose vaccine.** People who receive this vaccine have the most protection after 4 weeks.
- **Two-dose vaccine.** People who receive both doses of this vaccine have the most protection after 14 days. This vaccine has fewer side effects than the single-dose vaccine. It may be better for people with weaker immune systems and serious conditions, including HIV infection.

Who should get a vaccine for mpox?

A vaccine is recommended for

- people who have had or will have contact with someone who has mpox
- people who may be exposed to the virus at work, including health care workers and lab specialists

These recommendations may change as researchers learn more about mpox. Visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) website](#) for the latest information.

What if I have already been in contact with someone who has mpox?

If you have been exposed to the virus, it is best to get a vaccine within 4 days. This offers the best chance of preventing the disease. Talk with your health care professional about [vaccination](#) if you have been in contact with someone who has mpox.

Pregnancy, Baby Care, and Breastfeeding

Can mpox affect a pregnancy?

Yes, the virus can cross the [placenta](#) and infect a [fetus](#). The virus can also pass to a baby during or after birth. Other pregnancy problems have also been linked to mpox, including

- [preterm](#) birth
- [miscarriage](#)
- [stillbirth](#)

More information is needed to understand how mpox affects people during pregnancy. Researchers are working to gather more information as quickly as possible.

What are the symptoms of mpox during pregnancy?

The symptoms of mpox during pregnancy include fever, swollen lymph nodes, fatigue, sore throat, headache, muscle soreness, and rash. The rash can also appear in different forms at the same time. A pregnant person can develop new blisters while they still have older blisters with scabs. Talk with your [obstetrician–gynecologist \(ob-gyn\)](#) right away if you have symptoms of mpox.

How is mpox treated during pregnancy?

Antiviral medication helps the body fight the mpox virus. This medication can be taken during pregnancy, after pregnancy, and while breastfeeding. Breastfeeding children with mpox should also be treated.

How should I care for my baby if I have mpox?

If you have mpox and your baby does not, it is best to avoid direct contact until you are well again to prevent passing the disease to your baby.

- While you and your newborn are in the hospital or birth center, your health care team may recommend that your baby sleep in the nursery rather than in your room.
- When you go home from the hospital, you will need help with baby care so you can avoid direct contact.

- Breastfeeding should be avoided but only until symptoms go away (blisters are gone, scabs have fallen off, and new skin has formed). Your baby can be fed infant formula or human donor breast milk until you are ready to start or go back to breastfeeding.

Remember, these steps are temporary. Mpox symptoms usually go away in 2 to 4 weeks. Once you are healthy again you can breastfeed and hold your baby. Talk with your ob-gyn about mental health resources that can help you through this time, such as [Postpartum Support International](#). Your ob-gyn can also suggest breastfeeding support resources, such as lactation counselors.

Does the virus pass to a baby through breast milk?

Experts do not know if the virus can be passed to a baby through breast milk. If you are isolating with mpox, you should pump and throw away your breast milk until your mpox symptoms are gone. A caregiver can feed your baby infant formula or human donor breast milk. Talk with your ob-gyn about when it's safe to go back to breastfeeding or feeding pumped milk.

Which vaccine is best during pregnancy?

- The two-dose vaccine is best during pregnancy. Early studies suggest this vaccine is not likely to harm a fetus.
- The single-dose vaccine should not be taken if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. The single-dose vaccine increases the risk of pregnancy loss, fetal defects, and infection in a fetus or newborn.

A person who gets the single-dose vaccine outside of pregnancy should wait 4 weeks before getting pregnant. They should also not have contact with a pregnant or breastfeeding person in their household for 4 weeks after vaccination.

Glossary

Anus: The opening of the digestive tract through which bowel movements leave the body.

Fetus: The stage of human development beyond 8 completed weeks after fertilization.

Genitals: The sexual or reproductive organs.

Miscarriage: Loss of a pregnancy that is in the uterus.

Obstetrician–Gynecologist (Ob-Gyn): A doctor with special training and education in women’s health.

Placenta: An organ that provides nutrients to and takes waste away from the fetus.

Preterm: Less than 37 weeks of pregnancy.

Stillbirth: Birth of a dead fetus.

Vaccination: Giving a vaccine to help the body’s natural immune system develop protection from a disease.

Vaccines: Substances that help the body fight disease. Vaccines are made from very small amounts of weak or dead agents that cause disease (bacteria, toxins, and viruses).

If you have further questions, contact your ob-gyn.

Don't have an ob-gyn? [Search for doctors near you](#)

FAQ532

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