

Mpox

This information sheet contains information relevant for clade II mpox

Mpox is an illness caused by a virus that does not spread easily between people. It is commonly passed on through contact with the blisters or lesions of someone who has mpox. There are 2 types of mpox, known as clade I and II. Clade II is the most common type seen worldwide and all mpox infections reported in Aotearoa New Zealand so far have been clade II. Mpox cases are increasing in some parts of the world and local outbreaks of clade II mpox in Aotearoa continue to occur.



Signs and symptoms – what you can see and feel

Mpox symptoms can start with a flu-like illness (including fever, swollen glands, muscle aches, chills or tiredness).

Most people with mpox develop a rash or other skin changes, known as 'lesions'. Lesions are spots, bumps, blisters or sores that can affect any part of the body including face and mouth, arms and legs, genitals and bottom (both inside and outside).

Some people with mpox will not develop visible lesions but may have other symptoms. These could include inflammation inside the bottom, known as proctitis. Proctitis symptoms include pain, bleeding or discharge from the bottom and a constant feeling that you need to have a bowel movement (poo). Mpox can also cause pain when urinating (peeing) and swelling of the foreskin.



How does mpox spread?

Mpox does not spread easily between people. The ways mpox can spread includes:

- direct contact with mpox lesions. It is most commonly spread through sexual or intimate contact
- direct contact with bedding, clothing, towels and some other objects (including sex toys) used by someone with mpox.

People with mpox are infectious and can pass on the virus from when they first develop symptoms, up until their lesions crust, dry and fall off. This will normally take about 2 to 4 weeks.



People at highest risk of getting mpox

People at highest risk of getting mpox are those who have close physical, intimate or sexual contact with a person with mpox. In Aotearoa, mpox has mostly affected:

- gay, bisexual, takatāpui and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM)
- people who have sex with GBMSM.



Immunisation

Immunisation is available for eligible people and is the best way to protect against severe illness. The vaccine may not completely prevent you from getting mpox, but it will help to reduce complications such as pain and infection if you develop the illness.

To find out more about the mpox vaccine and if you are eligible, visit healthnz.govt.nz/mpoxvaccine, or call the Vaccination Helpline free on 0800 28 29 26 (8:30am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday).



Seeking health advice

If you are at risk of mpox and you develop symptoms, please seek medical advice. You can contact your nearest sexual health clinic (visit nzshs.org/nz-sexual-health-clinics), GP, hauora or healthcare provider, or call Healthline free on 0800 611 116, anytime 24/7 for free health advice and information. **In an emergency, call 111.**

Your information is protected under the Health Information Privacy Code.

If you need to be tested, mpox is diagnosed by swabbing skin lesions or other areas where symptoms occur.



People at highest risk of serious illness

People who have a weakened immune system, are pregnant, and infants and young children are at higher risk of serious illness from mpox, although mpox is rare in these groups.

If you (or someone you care for or had contact with) are in one of these groups and you think you have been exposed to mpox, seek advice from your healthcare provider as soon as possible or contact your public health service team at healthnz.govt.nz/national-public-health-service.



What happens if I get mpox?

If you test positive for mpox, your public health service team will be in contact to support you and provide advice on managing your symptoms and the precautionary measures you need to take to prevent spreading mpox to other people.

You will not be asked to isolate, but you will be asked to cover any lesions, not have sexual and intimate contact with anyone and to limit your contact with people at higher risk of serious illness from mpox.

For some people with mpox, lesions can become itchy or painful. Your healthcare provider can prescribe pain relief if you need it.

Occasionally people with mpox can become very sick. If your symptoms are getting worse, contact your healthcare provider for advice.

If you need to attend a healthcare setting, advise staff you have mpox. Cover any lesions and wear a well-fitting mask during your visit.



What do close contacts need to do?

If you had direct contact with mpox lesions, you may be considered a 'close contact'. You should contact your public health service team at healthnz.govt.nz/national-public-health-service for support and advice.

Close contacts who have been exposed to mpox are eligible for a free post-exposure vaccine. If given within 14 days after contact with someone with mpox, the vaccine will help lower your risk of developing mpox and reduce the severity of your symptoms if you become infected.

You will not be asked to quarantine (stay at home), but you should monitor for symptoms for 21 days from when you last had contact with someone with mpox.

If you develop any symptoms, contact your healthcare provider and tell them you are a close contact of a person with mpox and are developing symptoms. They will arrange for you to be reviewed and tested.



Protecting yourself and others

To reduce the risk of getting or passing on mpox:

- make sure you feel healthy and have no mpox symptoms before having close physical or sexual skin-to-skin contact with others
- do not have close physical (including sexual) contact with someone who has mpox or mpox symptoms
- do not have direct contact with the clothing, bedding or towels of someone with mpox.



For more information

- Visit the Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora website healthnz.govt.nz/mpox and healthnz.govt.nz/mpoxvaccine
- Visit the Healthify | He Puna Waiora website healthify.nz/mpox
- Visit the Burnett Foundation website burnettfoundation.org.nz
- Call Healthline on **0800 611 116**, anytime 24/7 for free health advice and information. You can choose to speak with a Māori or Pacific advisor, or a disability advisor. Interpreter services and NZ Relay support are also available.
- Call the free Vaccination Helpline on **0800 28 29 26**. Support is available Monday to Friday, between 8.30am and 5.00pm. You can choose to speak with a Māori or Pacific advisor, or a disability advisor. Interpreter services and NZ Relay support are also available.
- For people living or visiting rurally, you can contact a doctor after usual business hours by calling Ka Ora Telecare for free on **0800 2 KA ORA (0800 252 672)** or by visiting kaora.co.nz
- Free NZ Relay Services are available at nzrelay.co.nz if you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind or have speech communication difficulties.
- A dedicated helpline for Disability health support is available Monday to Friday, between 8.00am and 5.00pm. Call free on **0800 11 12 13** or text **8988** for help and information or visit healthpoint.co.nz/disability-helpline
- If you need mental health advice or support, call free or text **1737** anytime. There are also a range of dedicated LGBTQI+ support services available.