

# Mpox

This information sheet contains information relevant for clade I 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 clade II. Clade I is increasing in parts of Africa but the risk of it spreading widely in Aotearoa New Zealand remains very low.**



## 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 the 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 (weeing) 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, but clade I also appears to spread more easily (than clade II) through non-sexual physical contact with household members
- 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 usually take about 2 to 4 weeks.



## People at highest risk of getting mpox

Travellers to and from countries where there are clade I cases and outbreaks are at risk if they have close physical contact (including sexual and intimate contact) with someone with mpox.

In Africa, clade I mpox has mostly affected:

- adolescents and adults (through intimate sexual contact) – males and females are equally affected
- children in the same household as someone with mpox
- people who had close contact with infected animals.



## Immunisation

If you get mpox or you are a close contact of someone with mpox, your public health service team will discuss your eligibility for immunisation with you.

To find out more about the mpox vaccine and if you are eligible, visit [healthnz.govt.nz/mpoxvaccine](https://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](https://nzshs.org/nz-sexual-health-clinics)), GP, hauora or healthcare provider, or call Healthline 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 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.

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](https://healthnz.govt.nz/national-public-health-service)



## What happens if I get clade I mpox?

Unlike clade II mpox, if you test positive for clade I mpox, you will need to isolate (stay at home) until all your lesions have healed and you are no longer infectious – this is because clade I may spread more easily to others than clade II.

Your public health service team will be in regular contact with you 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. They will also let you know when you can leave isolation.

To protect others in your household from getting mpox, you will be asked to:

- cover your lesions
- not have physical (including sexual and intimate) contact with others, particularly people at higher risk of serious illness from mpox
- wear a well-fitting mask when around others in your household.

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 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](https://healthnz.govt.nz/national-public-health-service) for support and advice if they have not contacted you already.

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 should monitor for symptoms for 21 days from when you last had contact with someone with mpox. You will only be asked to isolate (stay at home) if you develop symptoms.

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](https://healthnz.govt.nz/mpox) and [healthnz.govt.nz/mpoxvaccine](https://healthnz.govt.nz/mpoxvaccine)
- Visit the Healthify | He Puna Waiora website [healthify.nz/mpox](https://healthify.nz/mpox)
- Call Healthline on **0800 611 116**, anytime 24/7 for free health advice and information. You can choose to speak with a Māori clinician if you are calling between 8am and 8pm. 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](https://kaora.co.nz)
- Free NZ Relay Services are available at [nzrelay.co.nz](https://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](https://healthpoint.co.nz/disability-helpline)
- If you need mental health advice or support, call free or text **1737** anytime.