

Mpox

Public Health Information Sheet



Mpox is a viral disease that is not easily spread. It is most commonly passed on through contact with the blisters or lesions of someone who has mpox. Mpox cases are increasing in some parts of the world and localised outbreaks in New Zealand continue to occur.

Signs and symptoms of Mpox

Mpox symptoms can start with a flu-like illness (including fever, swollen glands, muscle aches, chills or tiredness) that progresses to blisters, lesions or sores that can affect any part of the body including face and mouth, arms and legs, genitals and anus.

How does Mpox spread?

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

- direct contact with mpox skin lesions or sores. 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/sores crust, dry and fall off. This will normally take about two to four weeks.



People at higher risk

People at highest risk are those who have close physical, intimate or sexual contact with a confirmed mpox case. Globally, mpox has mostly affected:

- men who have sex with men (MSM)
- people who have sex with MSM. This may include people of any gender or sexual identity, whether they are transgender or cisgender, and non-binary people.

Those at risk should consider getting vaccinated, monitor for symptoms and seek health advice from their GP or sexual health service if symptoms develop.

Vaccination

Those who are at highest risk of mpox (including gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM), as well as people who have sex with MSM, regardless of their gender or sexual identity) are eligible for vaccination, which is available from Auckland Sexual Health Service. Visit their website or contact them on 0800 739 432 to arrange an appointment.

Those who have been exposed to mpox are eligible for a post-exposure vaccination which can decrease the risk of developing mpox and limit severity of symptoms. If you think you have been exposed, please contact the National Public Health Service Northern Region on (09) 623 4600 or Auckland Sexual Health Service 0800 739 432.

Seeking health advice

If you are at risk of mpox and you develop symptoms, please seek medical help. You can contact your nearest **sexual health clinic**, GP or healthcare professional, or call Healthline for free on 0800 611 116, anytime 24/7 for free health advice and information.

Mpox is diagnosed by swabbing any skin lesions or other areas where symptoms occur.

What happens if you get mpox

If you test positive for mpox, public health staff will be in contact to support you and provide advice on your symptoms and the precautionary measures you need to take to prevent spreading mpox to other people, and in particular people who are at high risk of severe disease. You will not be asked to isolate.

For some people with mpox, the skin lesions or sores 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 them you have mpox. Cover any lesions or sores and wear a mask during your visit.

If you are feeling seriously unwell and require the support of emergency services, call an ambulance on 111 and let them know you have mpox.

What close contacts need to do

If you are a close contact of someone with mpox you should contact the National Public Health Service Northern Region on (09) 623 4600.

You should also monitor for symptoms for 21 days from when you last had contact with a case.

If you develop any symptoms, contact your healthcare provider for further advice.

For more information

- Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora info.health.nz/mpox
- The Burnett Foundation www.burnettfoundation.org.nz
- Call Healthline for free 24/7 on 0800 611 116 info.health.nz/services-support/healthline
- Healthify | He Puna Waiora healthify.nz/health-a-z/m/monkeypox/

For free general health advice and information

Call Healthline on 0800 611 116, anytime 24/7 for free health advice and information about what to do next. 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.

Free NZ Relay Services are available at nzrelay.co.nz if you are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind or have a speech impediment.

For people living or visiting rurally, you can contact a doctor after hours at Ka Ora Telecare on 0800 2 KA ORA (0800 252 672) or visit www.kaora.co.nz.

Disability Helpline

A dedicated Disability Helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to support disabled people. Call free on 0800 11 12 13 or text 8988 for help and information.



Need more help?

You can call **Healthline** for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on **0800 611 116**.

Talk to your pharmacist, hauora Māori provider, Pacific health clinic or doctor.