



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MPox

Although the risk to the general population is small, it is good to be aware of what mpox is and what to do if you have concerns.

What is mpox?

Mpox is a rare disease caused by the monkeypox virus.

How is mpox spread?

Mpox spreads through contact with the virus from an animal, human, or materials such as towels or bedding contaminated with the virus. It can also be spread through close face-to-face contact when a person with mpox coughs or sneezes. Most cases to date in BC have been spread through close, intimate contact during sex. The virus enters the body through broken skin (even if not visible), the respiratory tract, or the mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth). The disease can affect anyone of any gender identity or sexual orientation, however, it has particularly impacted men in the 2SGBTQ+ community who have recently had sex with other men.

What are the symptoms of mpox?

Infection typically has two phases.

PHASE ONE:

A person can feel unwell with flu-like symptoms including fever, chills, intense headache, back pain, muscle aches and fatigue. Swollen lymph nodes (mainly in the groin area) may occur. This phase usually lasts between 1-5 days.

PHASE TWO:

About 1-5 days after the fever, a rash appears. The rash may initially look like flat or raised sores which progress to small, fluid-filled blisters. The blisters often change to large red bumps with pus. Eventually the rash crusts and scales off. The rash typically begins on the face and genitals. It can then spread to other parts of the body. Pain or swelling in the throat or rectum without visual sores can also occur.

Most mpox infections last approximately 2-4 weeks. A person can spread mpox to others during phase one or two of the illness. The rash can spread the mpox virus to others until all the scabs fall off and new skin can be seen.

How soon after exposure to mpox would symptoms appear?

It can take 5-21 days for symptoms to appear after being exposed to mpox.

How serious is mpox?

Risk to human health posed by mpox is low. Mpox typically resolves on its own with symptoms lasting between 2-4 weeks. Although more severe cases can occur, they are rare.

Immunocompromised individuals may be more likely to get more severe cases.

How is mpox treated?

Most individuals with mpox have mild symptoms and do not require treatment. For those requiring treatment, it is typically supportive and aims to ease symptoms. People with severe mpox may require hospitalization, supportive care and antiviral medicines to reduce the severity of symptoms and shorten time to recovery. The mpox vaccine can be given to prevent or minimize illness if given before symptoms of the illness appear.

How can I protect myself and others against mpox?

To protect yourself and others against mpox, know the signs and symptoms, how the virus spreads, what to do if you get ill, and the risk in your area or community. If the virus is spreading in your area or in your community, have open conversations with those you come into close contact with about any symptoms you or they may have. Avoid close contact with anyone who has mpox, including sexual contact. Clean your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

Is there a vaccine for mpox?

The Imvamune vaccine is approved in Canada for protection against mpox. The vaccine is not currently recommended for everyone. Only people who are at risk should be considered for vaccination. The vaccine can be used in two ways: **BEFORE** exposure to help protect self and others, or **AFTER** exposure (but before symptoms appear) to prevent or minimize illness.

BEFORE exposure:

Imvamune is available to Two-spirit, transgender people and cisgender males who self-identify as belonging to the gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men community, and answer yes to any of the questions below:

- Has sex with more than one partner
- Has sex with a partner who has more than one partner
- Has casual sex (e.g. cruising)
- Engages in sex work as a worker or client

Eligible individuals who have previously received a complete series of Imvamune vaccine (i.e. 2 doses) are considered protected and do not need additional doses at this time.

AFTER exposure:

Talk with your health care provider. If you do not have access to a health care provider, contact the [FNHA Virtual Doctor of the Day](#).

Public Health staff will reach out to known contacts (i.e., individuals that have been exposed to mpox that are at risk of developing the infection) to offer Imvamune vaccine to prevent or minimize illness. You should also monitor for symptoms because it can take around 5-21 days after exposure for a person to develop symptoms.

What should I do if I develop symptoms of mpox?

If you are concerned that you may have symptoms of mpox or may have been exposed to a known or suspected case of mpox, contact your health care provider.

If you do not have access to a health care provider, contact the [FNHA Virtual Doctor of the Day](#) or find a [clinic here](#).

Until you see a healthcare provider:

- Avoid close, intimate contact and sex with others.
- Avoid close contact with those at greater risk of severe illness including pregnant people, children, and people with weakened immune systems.
- Cover any sores or blisters as much as possible with clothing or bandages.
- Wear a mask when you are in close contact with others.
- Have someone else care for your animals/pets so you do not spread mpox to animals. If you do need to care for your animals while ill, take the same precautions that you use to protect people.
- Dispose masks, bandages, or other contaminated materials in a high-quality garbage bag and keep in an animal-proof receptacle to prevent access by pets/wild animals (particularly rodents).

General steps to prevent spread of infection such hand washing and staying home when feeling unwell are good ways to protect yourself and others.

What else do I need to know?

Mpox can be spread to animals, including your pets. If you have/suspect you have mpox, arrange for someone to take care of your pets. Be careful when disposing materials that may have been contaminated and ensure you dispose of them in an animal-proof receptacle.

Learn more about Communicable Disease Control at FNHA.ca:
<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control>