



Infection Prevention and Control Expert Group – Interim guidance on monkeypox at home or in a non-healthcare setting

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The Infection Prevention and Control Expert Group (ICEG) provides advice and information to support best practice for infection, prevention and control in community, hospital, and institutional settings.

This infection prevention and control guidance is intended for people with monkeypox at home or in a non-healthcare setting.

In this document, a person/people 'with monkeypox' includes confirmed and probable monkeypox cases. For further information on monkeypox case definitions, refer to the [Monkeypox virus infection – CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#).

The guidance has been adapted by ICEG, from the NSW Health Clinical Excellence Commission's guidance [Infection Prevention and Control Information for clinicians: Monkeypox](#).

For information relevant to health workers, please refer to the [ICEG Interim Guidance on Monkeypox for Health Workers](#).

ICEG will continue to review emerging medical evidence on the current monkeypox outbreak, and this guidance will be updated as appropriate.

For further guidance on the management of monkeypox, refer to the [Monkeypox virus infection – CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#).

Key recommendations

- To prevent spread of infection, people with monkeypox should, follow restriction and exclusion advice and stay away from other people (and animals/pets) until their rash or sores have fully healed, and as advised by the local public health unit¹ or their health provider. The sores are considered healed after all scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed underneath. This usually takes 2–4 weeks.
- People with suspected monkeypox who are waiting for test results should, follow restriction and exclusion advice and stay away from other people (and animals/pets) until they receive a negative result or as advised by their health provider or local public health unit.
- Hand hygiene using an alcohol-based hand rub or washing hands with soap and water should be practiced by anyone with monkeypox, and anyone who has had contact with a confirmed monkeypox case.
- People should not touch or share any linen, clothing or personal care items that have been in contact with an infected person (e.g., towels, razors, and toothbrushes).

¹ For information on definitions and management of suspected, probable and confirmed Monkeypox cases, refer to the [Monkeypox virus infection – CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#).

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare, but potentially serious, viral illness caused by the monkeypox virus (a member of the species *Monkeypox virus*, genus *Orthopoxvirus*).

It is usually found in Central and West Africa and has occasionally exported to other regions. Since 6 May 2022, there has been a global increase in cases reported in countries outside of endemic regions of Africa where monkeypox is not usually seen.

Monkeypox was first reported in Australia on 20 May 2022. On 23 July 2022, the World Health Organization Director-General declared the escalating global monkeypox outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. On 26 July 2022, Australia's Chief Medical Officer declared monkeypox a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance.

Symptoms

Monkeypox symptoms may begin with

- rash and sores (lesions)
- swollen lymph nodes
- fever
- headache
- muscle aches
- back aches
- chills and exhaustion.

Some people only experience the rash and sores. The rash often starts on the face, including in the mouth, and spreads to other parts of the body including the hands, feet, and chest. In this outbreak, it is being seen especially on genitals or around the anus of affected people.

The rash can vary from person-to-person and take on the appearance of pimples or blisters, which can burst to form sores, ulcers, or a scab. These can vary in size and number.

Symptoms usually begin 7-14 days after exposure; but the amount of time it takes for symptoms to show (the incubation period), can be as short as 5 days, or as long as 21 days.

How is monkeypox spread?

The monkeypox virus is usually spread through close, prolonged contact with an infected person or animals, or by contact with material contaminated with the virus.

Human-to-human transmission of monkeypox can occur through

- close contact with sores on the skin, including during sex
- body fluids, including respiratory droplets
- contaminated materials, such as linen, clothing, or towels.

Monkeypox does not usually spread easily between people and very rarely spreads via casual, non-intimate social contact.

Transmission by respiratory droplets (e.g., saliva, mucus) is less common, and usually requires prolonged face-to-face contact.

In the current outbreak, the majority of transmission appears to occur through close intimate contact.

How to stop the spread

Avoid physical contact and do not share linen, towels, or personal care items with anyone with monkeypox.

Regularly practice hand hygiene: wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Practice respiratory hygiene: cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow or tissues, dispose of used tissues immediately after use, and wash your hands.

If you develop symptoms, particularly if you have recently travelled overseas or had contact with a case, including sexual contact, you should seek care at your general practitioner or nearest sexual health clinic. It is important to contact your GP or sexual health clinic before your appointment, to ensure they can separate you from others. Make sure to wear a surgical mask and cover any skin lesions.

People with suspected monkeypox who are waiting for test results should follow restriction and exclusion advice to stay away from other people (and animals/pets), until they receive a negative result, as advised by their health provider or local public health unit.

Following a positive result, people with monkeypox, who do not require hospitalisation, should follow restriction and exclusion advice² and stay away from other people (and animals/pets) until their sores and rash have fully healed, and as advised by the local public health unit or health provider. The sores are considered healed after all scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed underneath. This usually takes 2–4 weeks.

Separation from others

Unless seeking medical attention, people with monkeypox should not visit high risk settings such as:

- early childhood education and care services
- aged care and health care settings
- schools
- other settings with young children and those at higher risk of severe disease³.

Essential activities

People with monkeypox should avoid non-urgent appointments (especially those in high-risk settings).

² For further information on restriction and exclusion advice, refer to [Monkeypox virus infection – CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#)

³ This includes infants, older people, immunocompromised people, and pregnant women.

People with monkeypox should stay at home or their residence unless they need to do urgent and essential activities, such as:

- grocery shopping
- collecting medicines
- solo outdoor exercise.

People should do these activities in places which are not crowded or during non-peak times.

Reducing risk of spread while outside the home or residence

When outside the home or residence, people with monkeypox should:

- wear a surgical mask and fully cover rash and lesions
- avoid public transport if lesions cannot be completely covered
- avoid contact with other people and animals.

Physical intimacy

People with monkeypox should avoid physical or intimate contact, including sexual activity until cleared.

As it is unclear whether viable virus may be present in semen after recovery, people who have had monkeypox should use condoms when having sex for a further 12 weeks after they have been cleared.

Work

People with monkeypox should work from home where possible. If they are unable to work from home, they should seek advice from their local public health unit on whether to attend the workplace. Occupations or workplaces that allow a person to work solo may be acceptable.

Preventing spread to others in the home or residence

People with monkeypox should limit contact with other household members, including friends or family, by staying in a room or designated area (if available). Avoid contact with other people and animals, including pets (to avoid the risk of human-to-animal transmission).

People with monkeypox should not share a bed or bedroom with another person.

People with monkeypox should not donate blood, cells, tissue, breast milk, semen, or organs.

When contact with others is necessary, the person with monkeypox should wear a surgical mask. If this is not possible (e.g., a child with monkeypox), other people should wear a surgical mask when around the person with monkeypox. Skin lesions should be covered, when possible (e.g., non-stick dressings, long sleeves, long pants), to minimise risk of contact with others.

People identified as contacts should follow public health advice in line with the [Monkeypox virus infection – CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#).

Utensils

Do not share dishes and eating utensils. The infected person does not need to use separate utensils if they are properly washed between use. Wash used dishes and eating utensils in a dishwasher (preferably set at 60C or above) or by hand with hot water and detergent, and dry.

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene (i.e., hand washing with soap and water or use of an alcohol-based hand rub) should be performed by the infected person and any of their contacts after touching the infected person, any lesions or associated material (e.g., dressings), clothing, linen, or environmental surfaces that may have had contact with lesion material. If the infected person has lesions/sores on their hands, hand hygiene should be performed using soap and water only, not with alcohol-based hand rub as this may cause further irritation and affect wound healing.

Cleaning and disinfection of the home or residence

If they are able, people infected with monkeypox should regularly clean and disinfect the area they are in. Specifically, frequently touched surfaces or items. The area should also be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after the person with monkeypox has been cleared by their health provider or public health unit to resume normal activities. Make sure to perform hand hygiene after any cleaning.

If someone else needs to perform cleaning, they should take care to avoid contact with any lesion/sore fluid or scabs or respiratory secretions (e.g., saliva, mucus) by wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). This includes:

- surgical mask
- gloves
- eye protection (e.g., goggles).

If they are required to clean while in the presence of the infected person, both people should wear a mask.

PPE should be taken off in the following order to prevent self-contamination:

1. Take off gloves; perform hand hygiene.
2. Take off eye protection; perform hand hygiene.
3. Take off mask; perform hand hygiene.

Cleaning

Cleaning means physically removing germs (such as the monkeypox virus), dirt, and grime from surfaces using a detergent and warm water.

Disinfection

Disinfection means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. Killing germs on a surface after cleaning can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

It is important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs.

Cleaning methods

Surfaces should be cleaned regularly, followed by disinfection using a household disinfectant. Particular attention should be paid to bathrooms, toilets, and frequently touched surfaces.

Cleaning and disinfection can be performed using a 2 in 1 cleaner and disinfectant solution and either disposable or launderable cloths or disposable wipes. Care should be taken to launder reusable cloths (see linen and laundry section below). If disposable cloths or cleaning disinfection wipes are used, dispose of used wipes into a bag, seal, dispose of into the waste (not recycling) and then perform hand hygiene.

Soft furnishings

To avoid contaminating soft furnishings and materials that cannot be laundered (e.g., upholstered furniture or mattresses), cover them with cover sheets, blankets, or waterproof mattress protectors. These coverings should be disposable or laundered regularly (see linen and laundry section).

If the person with monkeypox has had direct skin contact and/or excessive drainage of fluids from rashes onto soft furnishings, steam cleaning may be considered.

Flooring

Do not dry dust or sweep as this may spread infectious particles into the air. Wet cleaning methods are preferred.

Use a vacuum with a high-efficiency air (HEPA) filter, or if not available, the person vacuuming should wear a well-fitting mask or particulate filter respirator (P2/N95 or equivalent).

Bathroom usage

If possible, use a separate bathroom. If this is not possible, the infected person should clean and disinfect the shared bathroom, including counters, toilet seats and taps, after use.

If the infected person is unable to clean the area themselves, and another person is doing this, the cleaner should wear PPE (surgical mask, gloves, and eye protection) while cleaning. Once cleaning has been completed, remove, and dispose of the PPE, and perform hand hygiene.

Do not share towels, wash cloths, or personal care items such as toothbrushes and razors.

Avoid shaving rash-covered areas of the body. Shaving can spread the virus, and cause spread of the rash and sores to other parts of the body. It also increases the risk of a secondary bacterial infection.

Linen and laundry

Linen (e.g., bedding, towels, clothing) should be washed regularly in a standard washing machine on a warm/hot water cycle. Soiled laundry should not be shaken or handled in a manner that may spread infectious particles into the air and increase contamination of the environment.

When possible, the person with monkeypox should handle all contaminated linen and launder their own items. If this is not possible, the person cleaning should wear a mask, gloves, and protective eyewear, taking care when handling soiled laundry to avoid direct contact with contaminated material.

Do not wash contaminated clothing and linen from the infected person with other peoples' laundry. Wash contaminated linen in a separate load to clothes from other people who are not infected. Dry linen as per normal.

Avoid contact with other items or surfaces, make sure to clean and disinfect any surfaces touched (e.g., washing machine buttons and handles) and perform hand hygiene immediately after handling any launderable items.

Waste

Use a plastic bag to contain all the waste in the infected person's area, then tie the bag off and directly dispose of it into the general waste stream (not recycling). Hand hygiene should be performed immediately after disposing of waste.

About ICEG

ICEG advice represents a broad consensus among experts across a diverse range of fields, including infection prevention and control, infectious disease, pathology, primary care, nursing care, emergency care, critical care, care of older people, occupational and environmental health.

Further ICEG guidance on face masks, personal protective equipment and other infection prevention and control measures can be found on the [Department's website](#).