City and County of San Francisco
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Connecting People with Purpose
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Monkeypox Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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Background

What: Monkeypox is caused by the virus which has been identified for more than 50 years. It causes a viral syndrome with a fever, headache, body aches, and blistering rash that is uncomfortable but not life threatening. The infection itself is very rare.

Who: Transmission is not based on a person's gender or sexual orientation. Anyone who comes in close contact with monkeypox can get the disease, however, it has spread primarily among men having sex with men. The general public is at very low risk of getting monkeypox, and nearby coworkers are also not at risk from casual interactions.

How Monkeypox Spreads: It spreads by direct, intimate skin to skin contact, primarily from the fluid in the blisters. It does not spread more broadly, by other methods.

Why a public health emergency? A public health emergency was declared (locally and state-wide) in order to access greater resources to support education and evaluation, and to broaden access to preventative vaccine. The general public is not at risk in this emergency, rather a sector of our community.

FAQs

Can I get it from surfaces? No. It does not live on surfaces, however practicing good hand hygiene is encouraged for all.

Can I contract from a bus seat, a light rail seat, or a BART seat? No. It does not live on surfaces, and our transit does get cleaned daily.

Can I contract from the air? No. It does not spread by aerosol.

Can workers cleaning areas and surfaces contract it? Generally, no, but all employees who are cleaning surfaces should continue to use their appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when cleaning areas and surfaces. This includes appropriate gloves and hand protection when handling materials along with appropriate level of masking.

Can a person with monkey pox spread it unknowingly? There is not an asymptomatic spreading phase with monkey pox. It is very different from COVID which can have a contagious phase before the development of symptoms.

Why was I not notified of a case of monkeypox? In the same way that HIPAA protects private health information, CCSF protects the private health information of our employees. Since there is no risk to colleagues, there is no need for notification.

I work with clients who are not always healthy, can I ask them if they have monkeypox? No. In the same way that we protect private health information, and there is no risk to those working with clients, you should not attempt to screen out clients who may have monkeypox. It would be appropriate to ask in the setting of helping them access needed services.

When is someone who has had monkeypox no longer contagious? When the last of the rash blisters have scabbed over and the scab has come off revealing new skin. This can take between 1-3 weeks, with an average of 8 days. Their health care provider will also help determine when the employee is no longer contagious and may return to work safely.

I feel sick, could I have monkeypox? All employees need to undergo daily health screening. An employee who feels poorly and has any symptoms of headache, body aches, fatigue, or rash should not come to the worksite.

I have been intimate with someone who has monkeypox, what do I do? Any employees who have been engaging intimately with someone with confirmed or suspected monkeypox should seek care and may be eligible for preventive vaccination.

How long after exposure to an active monkeypox case does it take to develop symptoms? The infection usually appears 1-2 weeks after interaction. You are not contagious unless you develop symptoms. If you are feeling ill with symptoms of fever, body aches, rash most usually located on or around the genitals, hands, mouth area with someone suspected of having monkeypox, isolate, cover the rash and seek medical care and diagnosis (https://sf.gov/information/monkeypox)

How can I know I do not have Monkeypox? Through a visit with healthcare provider, and tests sent. It is diagnosed by culturing the fluid from the blisters.

Is there treatment available? There are antiviral treatments and vaccines may also play a role.