



Monkeypox and the Workplace

August 2, 2022

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by a virus similar to smallpox virus, but it is clinically much less severe. It causes blister-like lesions and flu-like symptoms.

Monkeypox Symptoms

Symptoms can include headache, fever, body aches, and a blistering rash. The symptoms may cause discomfort but generally do not require hospitalization.

Managing Active Infection

Treatments are available and can include oral medications, vaccination, and quarantine until the blisters are no longer oozing. Infected persons can leave quarantine when their blisters have healed, and new skin starts to form. Quarantine averages eight (8) days but can last two to three weeks.

How is Monkeypox Transmitted?

Monkeypox primarily spreads through intimate skin to skin contact. The virus can also spread by touching personal items (clothing, bedding, or towels) used by someone with monkeypox, or by contact with respiratory secretions. However, monkeypox most often spreads through intimate contact and is having an overwhelming impact on men who have sex with men. Similar to chickenpox or shingles, the fluid inside the blisters is infectious, and contact with this fluid is how it spreads.

Preventing Monkeypox Transmission

Avoiding contact with infected individuals is the primary prevention along with vaccination.

Workplace spread

Monkeypox is unlikely to spread in the workplace because the virus is transmitted primarily through intimate contact. Monkeypox cannot spread from someone who is without symptoms.

Nevertheless, employees are still required to under-go daily health screening and should not come to work with any flu-like symptoms.

Managing Monkeypox Exposure

Vaccination is an effective way to prevent monkeypox infection after exposure (the supply of vaccines remains limited at this time). Persons having contact with an infected individual should monitor their temperature twice daily. If symptoms develop, immediately self-isolate and contact the local health department or a personal health care provider for guidance. Specific clinical questions should be directed to a personal health care provider.

Hygiene

1. Hand hygiene – the use of an alcohol-based hand rub or hand washing with soap and water – should be performed by people with monkeypox and household contacts after touching rash material, clothing, etc.
2. Cover all skin rashes to the extent possible by wearing long sleeves or long pants. Gloves can be considered for covering rash on the hands when not in isolation such as when receiving medical care.

3. People with monkeypox should use well-fitting source control (e.g., medical mask), if close contact with others cannot be avoided, such as when receiving medical care.
4. Other household members should wear a respirator or a well-fitting mask when in close contact (e.g., within 6 feet) with the person with monkeypox for more than a brief encounter.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Recommended **PPE** when caring for a patient with a suspected or confirmed case include a **gown, gloves, eye protection (goggles or face shields), and an N95 or other NIOSH-approved respirators.**

Monkeypox and Leave

Employees who develop flu-like symptoms, including fever, chills, or a new skin rash, should stay home. Employees can use accrued paid sick leave while self-isolating. Employees may also use other accrued paid leave in lieu of sick leave. For symptoms that are also characteristic of COVID-19 infection employees can use their allocation of COV while self-isolating and seeking a diagnosis.

Additional Information

The following information is available to assist the public and health care providers who seek more information.

- SF educational info: <https://sf.gov/information/monkeypox>
- SFDPH: <https://www.sfdcp.org/>
- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html>