

Monkeypox (MPX) Fact Check

Information on symptoms, prevention, what to do in case of suspected or confirmed infection

Currently, there is an outbreak of monkeypox all over the world, also in Austria. If you feel any symptoms, in particular after high-risk contacts, please contact your physician or call the health hotline 1450!

Monkeypox is a disease that must be reported to the public health authorities.

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox (MPX) is an infection caused by the monkeypox virus.

How is the disease passed on?

- Direct contact with infected people's rashes, blisters or pustules, e.g. through:
 - kissing
 - hugging
 - cuddling
 - having sex
- Contact with objects used by infected people, e.g.:
 - towels
 - bedding
 - clothes
 - tableware
 - sex toys

- Droplet infection, e.g.:
 - extended conversations without sufficient distance

In case of close contact (including sexual contact) with sick people, an infection is very likely. The fluid inside the blisters is highly contagious.

What are the symptoms caused by monkeypox?

- Initially, general symptoms of illness will appear (5 to 21 days after contact with an infected person):
 - Fever, shivering (chills), exhaustion
 - Pain: headache, back pain, muscle aches
 - Swollen lymphatic glands
- Skin lesions will appear one to three days later:
 - Rashes: spots, blisters, pustules
 - May spread to the entire body, also the mucosa, and cause severe pain
 - Later, they turn into scabs that will fall off eventually
 - Links to photos: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/monkeypox/images-monkeypox-lesions>

Until all scabs have fallen off and all skin lesions have completely healed you can pass the infection on to other people (usually for 3–4 weeks).

How dangerous is monkeypox?

- Usually, the symptoms will disappear on their own within a few weeks.
- In exceptional cases, the course of the disease may be severe or even fatal:
 - Additional skin infections
 - Pneumonia
 - Inflammation of the eyes with permanent eye damage
- The following groups of people are at increased risk for a more severe course of monkeypox:
 - Newborns and children (<12 years)
 - Pregnant women
 - Very old people (>80 years)
 - Immunocompromised persons

How can I protect myself from monkeypox?

- Pay strict attention to personal hygiene
- Avoid close contact with infected people
- Avoid touching objects used by infected people
- Avoid multiple and frequent sexual contacts, including with anonymous partners

Using condoms does not provide sufficient protection from monkeypox, as the virus may also be passed on through close (skin) contact (also during sexual activities)!

What should I do if I think that I have monkeypox?

Checklist: Is your answer to one or more of the following questions yes?

- Do I have any symptoms?
- Have I had any close contact with a person whose monkeypox infection was confirmed?
- Have I had many close contacts during the past 21 days?
 - Also sexual contacts?
 - Mainly with strangers?
- Have I recently been to a place where monkeypox infections have occurred?

If yes:

- Strictly avoid any further contacts and practice proper hygiene
- Contact your physician or call the health hotline 1450
- Go see your physician for a medical check
 - Be sure to make an appointment by telephone in advance!

I had contact with a monkeypox-infected person. What should I do?

- Strictly avoid close contacts
 - in particular with risk groups
- Pay strict attention to personal hygiene

- Contact the health hotline 1450
 - You should be able to provide information regarding your symptoms, any smallpox vaccinations you might have had earlier, and the most recent contact with the infected person
- Contact persons registered with the public health authorities can get vaccinated even after they had contact; vaccination should be obtained as early as possible within four days after contact and is recommended within 14 days at the latest
 - For more details, contact your local public health authority
- Contact your physician if you notice any symptoms

What should I do after a monkeypox infection has been confirmed?

- Official quarantine until all skin lesions have completely healed:
 - A medical examination is required to confirm that all skin lesions have completely healed
 - Strictly avoid any kind of physical contact with other people
 - If several persons are living in the same household, make sure you stay in your own room, ideally use your own toilet and bathroom
 - Do not share any household items, towels or bedding with other people
- Notification of contact persons to the public health authorities:
 - (Close) contacts during the past 21 days
 - Contact persons may get vaccinated after contact
- Medical care:
 - If your condition gets worse, call the health hotline 1450 or contact your physician

What should I do once the official quarantine has ended?

- Clean and disinfect all rooms you have used
 - For detailed instructions please refer to “Empfehlungen für Patient:innen und Haushaltsangehörige zur abschließenden Reinigung und Desinfektion bei bestätigter Affenpocken-Infektion”
- Use condoms during sexual intercourse for another eight weeks

How can I get vaccinated against monkeypox?

At present, a limited amount of monkeypox vaccine is available in Austria. The following persons are eligible for vaccination:

- Preventive vaccination is available for health-care professionals at high risk of infection, and for people whose behaviour puts them at high risk, i.e. people with frequent and multiple sexual contacts, in particular men with same-sex partners
- In case of contact with a monkeypox-infected person, vaccination is also possible after exposure, i.e. after contact.
 - Confirmed contact person (“vaccination after exposure”)
 - Ideally within four days, but no later than 14 days after contact
 - Persons whose behaviour puts them at high risk, i.e. persons with frequent and multiple sexual contacts, in particular men with same-sex partners

Where can I get vaccinated?

- The public health authorities will arrange for you to be vaccinated
- If you are a contact person or a person at high risk, please contact your competent local public health authority

Where can I get tested?

- In case of suspected monkeypox infection, a medical examination will be performed by a physician
 - Making a prior appointment by telephone is required [see also: What should I do if I think that I have monkeypox?]

Where can I find more information on the issue of monkeypox?

- Austria
 - [Humane Affenpocken \(sozialministerium.at\)](https://www.sozialministerium.at)
 - [Affenpocken – AGES](#)
 - [Wissen statt Vorurteile – Affenpocken – Aids Hilfe Wien](#)

- Europe
 - [Monkeypox \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [Joint ECDC-WHO Regional Office for Europe Monkeypox Surveillance Bulletin \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [RKI – Infektionskrankheiten A-Z – Affenpocken](#)
 - [UK –Monkeypox: background information](#)
- Worldwide
 - [Monkeypox outbreak 2022 - Global \(who.int\)](#)
 - [Monkeypox | Poxvirus | CDC](#)
- Contact a physician
 - 1450
 - [“Arztsuche” \(aerztekammer.at\)](#)
- Symptom checker
 - [Symptomchecker der Charité: PoxApp \(charite.de\)](#)