

Monkeypox: Frequently Asked Questions

NOTE: If you do not find an answer below to a question, please also check CDC's [monkeypox FAQs](#) and [CDC's monkeypox Clinician FAQs](#).

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is an illness that is caused by a virus. In some cases, monkeypox can be a serious illness. For more information, please visit health.ri.gov/monkeypox.

Is monkeypox serious?

The strain of monkeypox that is causing the current outbreak generally causes mild illness that lasts two to four weeks. Often, people will get better on their own and without treatment. However, some people are at high-risk of serious illness. People at risk for serious illness or death include: people with compromised (weakened) immune systems, children younger than age 8, people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Am I likely to get monkeypox?

At this time, the risk of monkeypox in the United States is low. The virus does not spread easily between people and people who do not have symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

Symptoms of monkeypox can include:

- A rash that can look like pimples or blisters that appears on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body, like the hands, feet, chest, genitals, or anus (for pictures of monkeypox rash, please see <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/index.html>)
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and backache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion

Sometimes people have symptoms like a fever and swollen lymph nodes first, and then a rash. Sometimes people get a rash first, followed by other symptoms. Others only experience a rash. The rash goes through different stages before healing completely. Most infections last two to four weeks and resolve on their own, but some cases can become serious.

What should I do if I have symptoms of monkeypox?

- Contact a healthcare provider right away
- Remind the healthcare provider that monkeypox is circulating
- Avoid close contact (including intimate physical contact) with others until a healthcare provider examines you
- Avoid close contact with pets or other animals until a healthcare provider examines you

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- If you are waiting for test results, avoid close contact with others
- If your test is positive, stay isolated until your rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of skin has formed

How does monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox can spread from person to person in different ways. It can spread through:

- Direct contact with a rash, scabs, or body fluids
- Contact with items that have touched body fluids or sores, like towels, clothing, or bedding
- Face-to-face contact through respiratory droplets

People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others. Monkeypox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has healed and a new layer of skin has formed. Illness typically lasts two to four weeks.

Can I get monkeypox from having sex?

Monkeypox is not considered a sexually transmitted infection, but it often spreads through close, skin-to-skin contact. In this outbreak, most cases have been associated with sexual or intimate contact.

Is monkeypox a concern for gay men, bisexual men, and men who have sex with men?

Many gay men, bisexual men, and men who have sex with men have been diagnosed with monkeypox. We encourage gay men, bisexual men, and men who have sex with men to follow prevention and screening recommendations listed below. For more information, please see [RIDOH's web page, "Sexual Health Information for Gay/Bisexual Men and Gender Diverse People."](#)

It is important to note that while many of the identified cases are within networks of self-identified gay and bisexual men, trans people, and men who have sex with men, **people of any sexual orientation or gender identity can become infected with and spread monkeypox.**

- Consider covering exposed skin in dense, indoor crowds
- Don't share bedding or clothing with others when possible
- Before intimate physical contact, talk to partners about their health and any recent rashes or sores
- If you have a new, unexplained rash or other symptoms, call a healthcare provider.
 - If you do not have a healthcare provider or insurance, call a sexual health clinic or community health center (e.g., Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Open Door Health, The Miriam Hospital STD/HIV clinic, Providence Community Health Centers, Thundermist Health Center, Tri-County Health Center)
 - Before visiting a healthcare facility, call and let them know you are experiencing symptoms of monkeypox.
 - If you visit a healthcare facility, please wear a mask and remind the provider that monkeypox is circulating.
 - Isolate at home, including from those in your household, until you have been seen by a healthcare provider

What can I do to protect myself?

How to protect yourself:

- Consider covering exposed skin in dense, indoor crowds

- Don't share bedding or clothing with others when possible
- Before having intimate physical contact, talk to partners about their health and any recent rashes or sores
- Stay aware if traveling to countries where there are monkeypox outbreaks
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you were potentially exposed. You may be a candidate for a post-exposure vaccination to prevent the development of the disease

How to protect others:

If you have symptoms, particularly a rash consistent with monkeypox (even if you do not think you were in contact with anyone with monkeypox), or if you have been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with monkeypox:

- Stay home if you are feeling sick
- Contact a healthcare provider right away. If you do not have a healthcare provider or insurance, call a public health clinic (e.g., Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Open Door Health, The Miriam Hospital STD/HIV clinic, Providence Community Health Centers, Thundermist Health Center, Tri-County Health Center)
- Isolate at home, including from those in your household, until you have been seen by a healthcare provider
- Cover the rash with clean, dry, loose-fitting clothing
- Inform sex partners about any symptoms you are experiencing
- Wear a well-fitted mask
- If you are contacted by public health officials, answer their confidential questions to help protect others who may have been exposed

Are there treatments for monkeypox?

Monkeypox and smallpox viruses are genetically similar, which means that antiviral drugs developed for smallpox may also be used to treat monkeypox virus infections.

Antivirals, such as tecovirimat (also known as TPOXX), may be recommended for some people who are more likely to get severely ill, like patients who have weakened (compromised) immune systems. Not all patients are clinically eligible for this treatment. In close consultation with patients' healthcare providers and the CDC, RIDOH is authorizing and coordinating the use of treatment for eligible patients.

Are there vaccines for monkeypox?

There are vaccines to help prevent monkeypox virus infection. Vaccination within four days of exposure can prevent illness and if given within 14 days of exposure can significantly reduce severity of illness should the person develop illness. People vaccinated in Rhode Island are receiving the two-dose JYNNEOS vaccine series. At this time, CDC is only distributing JYNNEOS vaccine. CDC does not recommend widespread vaccination against monkeypox right now.

Who is eligible for vaccination?

Rhode Island is vaccinating people who meet certain criteria. The following people are eligible for vaccination:

- People who are close contacts of an individual with a known case of monkeypox
- People who are age 18 or older **AND** are:

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- Any gay, bi, queer, or other man who has sex with men **OR**
- Any person who has sex with a partner who is gay, bisexual, or a man who has sex with men **OR**
- People of any gender who are commercial sex workers **OR**
- People who work in or have sex in group or public sex venues **OR**
- Healthcare workers who are caring for individuals with confirmed or suspected monkeypox or are testing or vaccinating people who are at risk for monkeypox **OR**
- Laboratory workers who handle monkeypox specimens

Where can I get vaccinated?

Open Door Health, The Miriam Hospital Infectious Disease Clinic, Tri-County Health Center, and Thundermist Health Center have received monkeypox vaccine and have been vaccinating their eligible patients. Additional clinics have requested vaccine. We will update this list as these clinics begin offering vaccine. In addition, the Rhode Island Department of Health is offering community clinics as vaccine becomes available. Please visit health.ri.gov/monkeypox to learn more about these clinics.

Are monkeypox vaccines free?

While monkeypox vaccination is free and there is no out-of-pocket cost associated with vaccination at State-sponsored community clinics, other healthcare providers (such as Open Door Health, Thundermist Health Center, and Tri County Health Center, and the Miriam Infectious Disease Clinic) may bill patients' health insurance for administration of the vaccine. If you have any questions or concerns about billing or costs, please call the vaccine provider or your health insurance provider.

How do I make a vaccination appointment?

To make a vaccination appointment, go to health.ri.gov/monkeypox. Scroll down the page until you see the orange button for "Monkeypox Community Vaccination Clinics." Click on this button to see all available clinics. Registration links for appointments are available in the Monkeypox Community Vaccination Clinic spreadsheet.

Are appointments required to get vaccinated?

Appointments are not required for vaccination at a State-sponsored community clinic. Appointments may be required by private vaccinators (e.g., Open Door Health, Thundermist Health Center Tri-County Health Center or The Miriam Hospital Infectious Disease Clinic).

Will an explanation of benefits be sent to me or my insurance policy holder?

While monkeypox vaccination is free and there is no out-of-pocket cost associated with vaccination at State-sponsored community clinics, private vaccinators (such as Open Door Health, Thundermist and Tri-County Health Center, and the Miriam Infectious Disease Clinic, may bill patients' health insurance for administration of the vaccine. If you are vaccinated at a private facility, please ask about any administration fee billed to insurance in advance of your vaccination. If you are covered under someone else's policy and are concerned about an explanation of benefits being sent to the policyholder, you may also contact your health insurer to find out the process under the law for requesting an explanation of benefits sent directly to you instead of the policy holder. To avoid any billing issues, please make an appointment at one of RIDOH's community vaccination locations (this does not include Tri-County clinics that are listed on the spreadsheet). There are no costs, and no insurance information is required for State-sponsored monkeypox vaccination clinics.

What happens to the information I submit when I make an appointment for a monkeypox vaccination?

When you register for your vaccination appointment, you are asked a few questions to help us understand if you are eligible for this vaccine and if you experience any conditions that might make the vaccine less safe for you. If you are 16 or older, the information that is sent to Rhode Island's Child and Adult Immunization Registry (RICAIR) is: your name, date of birth, sex, race/ethnicity, home address, phone number (if provided) and email address (if provided), and information about the vaccine you received.

Can I get vaccinated for monkeypox at the same time as getting other vaccines?

You can get vaccinated for monkeypox at the same time as getting most other vaccines, like the flu vaccine. Monkeypox vaccination should not be delayed. However, people who recently got vaccinated for monkeypox may consider waiting four weeks before getting a COVID-19 vaccine or booster. This is because of the observed risk for myocarditis and pericarditis after receiving Moderna, Pfizer, and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines and the unknown risk for myocarditis and pericarditis following vaccination with JYNNEOS for monkeypox. Please speak with your healthcare provider if you have questions about your vaccination schedule.

What is the Vaccine Interest Notification List?

If you cannot currently get an appointment to be vaccinated through clinics being held by Open Door Health, the Miriam Hospital Infectious Disease Clinic, Thundermist Health Center, Tri-County Health Center, or a community clinic, you can submit your information to the Vaccine Interest Notification List. We will contact you when vaccine is available.

Sign up for the Vaccine Interest Notification List: <https://bit.ly/3oPcXi3>

If you need help signing up for the Vaccine Interest Notification List, please call the RIDOH Health Information Line at 401-222-5960.

How are vaccines administered?

When the JYNNEOS vaccine first became available, it was administered by subcutaneous injection, which means it was administered into a layer of fat underneath the skin in the upper arm. On August 9, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) began allowing healthcare providers to administer JYNNEOS by an intradermal injection. This means the vaccine is administered between two upper layers of skin in the forearm and with a smaller needle. This is how sensitivity tests for allergies and tuberculosis are done.

FDA made this change because intradermal injections require a smaller dose. Research shows that intradermal and subcutaneous administration produce a similar immune response. This means we expect that people who get vaccinated by subcutaneous injection and intradermal injection will have similar protection against monkeypox. By offering this vaccine through intradermal injection, we will effectively increase our supply of JYNNEOS vaccine by five times. This will help make sure everyone who wants to be vaccinated will have an opportunity to be vaccinated. Intradermal administration can cause more redness, swelling, and itchiness at the injection site.

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How is Rhode Island tracking cases?

Monkeypox is a reportable disease. This means that healthcare providers report suspected cases to the Rhode Island Department of Health. Specimens are tested at the Rhode Island State Health Laboratories (RISHL) and certain commercial laboratories. All cases of monkeypox are reported to CDC. Case counts can be viewed [here](#).

How can I get tested for monkeypox?

If you have symptoms, particularly a rash consistent with monkeypox (even if you do not think you were in contact with anyone with monkeypox), please contact a healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider will work with the Rhode Island Department of Health to coordinate evaluation and a test for monkeypox.

I think I was exposed to monkeypox. What should I do?

If you think you were exposed to monkeypox, please contact a healthcare provider. The healthcare provider will examine you and arrange for a vaccine. If you do not have a healthcare provider, you can call a public health clinic or community health center (e.g., Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Open Door Health, The Miriam Hospital STD/HIV clinic, Providence Community Health Centers, Thundermist Health Center, Tri-County Health Center) or the Rhode Island Department of Health at 401-222-5690.

Who can I contact with additional questions about monkeypox?

Please see the below resources for more information about monkeypox. If you have other questions, you can call the Rhode Island Department of Health Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 401-222-5960.

- health.ri.gov/monkeypox
- [monkeypox information](#)
- [Print Resources | Monkeypox | Poxvirus | CDC](#)
- [Monkeypox \(who.int\)](#)
- [Open Door Health Monkeypox Information](#)
- [DoltRight](#) – The Miriam Hospital HIV/STD Clinic
- Title X-funded family planning clinics: [Family Planning Services: Department of Health \(ri.gov\)](#)

If you are a healthcare professional with questions about monkeypox, please see the resources listed below.

Any suspected cases of monkeypox must be immediately reported to RIDOH by calling 401-222-2577 (8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday) or 401-276-8046 (after hours) for case management.

- [Clinician FAQs](#)
- [Information for Healthcare Professionals](#)
- [Considerations for Monkeypox Vaccination](#)