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Questions and Answers Regarding Monkeypox

For Administrators and Staff of Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) such as Colleges and Universities

Where can I find the latest information on monkeypox?

Information can be found on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) monkeypox website](#), specifically the [page for Institutions of Higher Education](#) or the [New York State Department of Health \(NYSDOH\) monkeypox website](#). New York City based institutions can find more information on the [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene \(NYCDOHMH\) website](#), as well.

How can we protect our campus community while avoiding stigma?

IHEs can help by providing monkeypox information to different communities and various channels. Be careful to avoid marginalizing groups who may be at increased risk for monkeypox. Keep messages fact-based to help prevent stigmatizing populations most affected. CDC [communication resources](#) including a tip sheet for [reducing stigma](#) and NYSDOH downloadable [materials](#) are available.

What are the signs and symptoms of monkeypox?

Signs and symptoms of monkeypox can include:

- Rashes, bumps, or blisters on or around the genitals or in other areas like hands, feet, chest, or face (prolonged phase).
- Flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache, muscle aches, chills, and fatigue. These signs and symptoms may occur before or after the rash appears, or not at all (prodromal phase).
- There can be significant pain associated with symptoms, which may interfere with basic functions such as eating, urination, and defecation.

How is monkeypox spread?

The most common way monkeypox spreads is through close, physical contact such as during sex, hugging, and kissing. Spread can also happen by touching clothing or linens that have been contaminated with body fluids. This means anyone can get monkeypox regardless of gender identity, birth sex, or sex of sex partner(s). However, based on the current outbreak, certain populations are being affected by monkeypox more than others, including gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender nonconforming community and other communities of men who have sex with men (MSM). Based on previous outbreaks of monkeypox around the world, some groups might also be at heightened risk for severe outcomes if they contract monkeypox. This includes people with weakened immune systems, older adults, children under 8 years of age, and people who are pregnant. It does NOT include attending class, or walking to class, or hanging out in a dorm room.

Why is this important to institutions of higher education (IHEs)?

The fluid social networks on a college/university campus could aid the spread of monkeypox. Awareness of risk and prevention strategies are key to avoiding outbreaks.

How can students and staff protect themselves?

Individuals can protect themselves by taking 4 simple steps, which are especially important for those who may be at higher risk for severe disease, including people with weakened immune systems:

1. Ask your sexual partner(s) whether they have a rash or other signs or symptoms consistent with monkeypox.
2. Avoid skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a rash or other monkeypox-related signs or symptoms.
3. If you are exposed or experience symptoms, make sure to contact a health care provider.
4. Follow reputable sources of health information, including NYSDOH, CDC, and your local health department.

Is there a vaccine to prevent monkeypox?

JYNNEOS is licensed by the US FDA as a 2-dose series for the prevention of monkeypox, including people under 18 years of age. If given within four (4) days of exposure, this vaccine can reduce the likelihood of infection, and within 14 days might reduce severity of symptoms. There is currently a limited supply of JYNNEOS vaccine, although more vaccine is expected in the coming months. NYSDOH is rolling out vaccine in a phased approach, as it becomes available, in accordance with CDC guidance and in partnership with local health departments and health care providers.

Who is eligible for vaccination?

Statewide eligibility currently includes the following New Yorkers: Individuals with recent exposure to a suspected or confirmed case of monkeypox within the past 14 days **OR** those at high risk of a recent exposure to monkeypox, including gay men and members of the bisexual, transgender, and gender non-conforming community and other communities of men who have sex with men and who have engaged in intimate or skin-to-skin contact with others in the past 14 days areas where monkeypox is spreading **OR** individuals who have had skin-to-skin contact with someone in a social network experiencing monkeypox activity, including men who have sex with men who meet partners through an online website, digital application ("app"), or social event, such as a bar or party.

Where to go to receive vaccination

People identified by a local health department as exposed to a suspected or confirmed case of monkeypox in the past 14 days should work directly with their local health department and health care provider to discuss obtaining the JYNNEOS vaccine. There is currently a limited federal supply of JYNNEOS vaccine, although more vaccine is expected in the coming weeks and months. The New York State Department of Health is distributing vaccine to local health departments for targeted distribution, in accordance with CDC guidance.

What should individuals do if they have been exposed or have signs or symptoms consistent with monkeypox?

Those who experience signs or symptoms consistent with monkeypox, such as characteristic rashes or lesions, should contact their health care provider for a risk assessment. This includes anyone who traveled to countries where monkeypox cases have been reported or has had contact with someone who has a similar rash, or who received a diagnosis of suspected or confirmed monkeypox. If a rash is present, individuals should cover their rashes and avoid close contact with anyone. If there is fever, chills, or respiratory symptoms, they should isolate in their residence hall or home.

Individuals who have been exposed to monkeypox but have no signs or symptoms do not need to be excluded from school or work duty, but should undergo active surveillance for signs and symptoms, which includes measurement of temperature at least twice daily for 21 days following the exposure. Before reporting for school or work each day, the individual should be self-screening for evidence of fever or rash. If an individual has a temperature of 100.4 and above, then they should not report to school or work duty.

Are there treatments available?

Antiviral medications exist to treat monkeypox, which may be appropriate for some people. Those who develop a rash or skin lesions should be sure to:

- Keep rash areas clean and dry to protect against secondary infections
- Be conscious of sun exposure to avoid discoloring exposed lesions
- Talk to a health care provider about over-the-counter medications, which might be helpful, such as oral antihistamines and topical agents such as calamine lotion, hydrocortisone, petroleum jelly, and lidocaine cream or gels
- If there is constipation, over-the-counter stool softeners (docusate sodium) or laxatives (e.g., MiraLAX) might be helpful to reduce peri-anal discomfort

Anyone experiencing a painful rash or skin lesion should contact a health care provider about medication to help with pain management. Prescription medicated mouthwashes and topical gels can provide pain relief and keep rashes and lesions clean and are widely available.

Where to go for testing

If you have been exposed or have signs or symptoms consistent with monkeypox contact your health care provider or campus health center. Testing can be done at any outpatient clinic. If you reside on campus and signs or symptoms worsen after hours, coordinate with your resident advisor to seek needed care. If your campus offers a 24-hr telehealth consultation number, please use that, as well.

What is the role of the campus health center?

The campus health center should be the primary place students seek care. Providers should be informed on current monkeypox testing and treatment instructions, use standard precautions when caring for potential cases, and **never** turn away a student who has symptoms consistent with monkeypox who requests testing.

What is the role of the Resident Advisor/Resident Director?

Students who reside on campus may look to their Resident Advisors (RA) or Resident Directors (RD) for advice outside of the Campus Health Center hours. If a student asks a Resident Advisor or Residence Director about monkeypox, it is an important opportunity to be helpful. It is common for people who think they have monkeypox to be uncertain and maybe even anxious. The RAs/RDs should know the procedure for their campus regarding medical attention after hours, inform appropriate Residence Life staff of a potential case, and provide roommates with information on how to protect against monkeypox post exposure (i.e., watch for symptoms).

When is someone with monkeypox contagious?

During the incubation period, 1-2 weeks after exposure, a person is not believed to be contagious. At the onset of signs or symptoms, one might be contagious and should isolate. Once there is a rash

present, a person is contagious until all the scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed underneath.

What to do if a roommate tests positive?

If a roommate tests positive for monkeypox, the other roommate/roommates should avoid close contact with the positive person, watch for symptoms, don't share clothes or linens, and get tested if a rash develops.

Do students go to class if exposed to monkeypox?

Individuals who have been exposed to monkeypox do not need to quarantine or be excluded from school or work. It is important to self-monitor for signs and symptoms, which includes measurement of temperature at least twice daily for 21 days following the exposure. If an individual has a temperature of 100.4 and above, then they should not report to school or work duty.

How to handle cleaning and disinfection of laundry or common area furniture that was exposed to monkeypox

Remind students living in a residence hall to report any cases of monkeypox to the Resident Director or the Residence Life office. This will ensure that proper cleaning and disinfection of common areas such as bathrooms and lounges can be completed. The following guidance should be followed by both on and off campus students:

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

If cleaning and disinfection is done by someone other than the individual with monkeypox, the person should wear clothing that fully covers the skin, disposable medical gloves, eye protection and a respirator or well-fitting mask. Additional PPE may be needed depending on the cleaning and disinfection products used. Follow product label instructions for proper use and handling including use of PPE.

- **Laundry**

Soiled laundry should not be mixed with laundry from other individuals. Used bed linens and towels should be folded inward during removal and not shaken. Shaking laundry can cause infectious particles to become airborne. Used laundry should be contained within a washable, non-mesh or plastic laundry bag for transport to the laundry facilities. Washable laundry bags can be washed with the soiled laundry. Care should be taken to keep bed linens and towels folded inward as they are placed into the washing machine. Staff handling soiled laundry should wear, at a minimum, disposable medical gloves and a well-fitting mask or N95. After placing the laundry into the washing machine, dispose of the gloves and perform hand hygiene using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. All laundry should be washed at warmest temperatures recommended on the fabric label and follow detergent label and instructions for use. Bleach is not necessary to remove infectious particles. Clean, wet laundry should be dried at the highest temperature allowed. No personal protective equipment (PPE) or special handling is necessary after drying the clean laundry.

- **Disinfecting non-porous (hard) and porous (soft) surfaces**

Be sure to clean areas before disinfecting. Avoid sweeping and vacuuming and use wet methods such as disinfection wipes and wet mopping. For soft surfaces, a removable cover can be placed over the soft surface that can be laundered or discarded. Steam cleaning may be considered if excessive contamination of porous surfaces has occurred.

Further guidance is listed here:

https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/monkeypox/docs/cleaning_and_disinfection_guidance.pdf.

When to isolate?

We recognize that the college environment is different than others, and isolation can be more challenging. Students who have active symptoms (prodromal phase) of monkey pox, such as, fever, chills and cough or other respiratory illness should isolate at home.

When the prodrome has concluded; fever is gone, chills are absent, and the cough has gone yet the rash persists, the individual has entered the prolonged phase of the illness. It will take 2-4 weeks for the rash to scab over and be covered by new skin.

Those who have a rash but not those other symptoms may leave isolation if lesions are covered, and they can wear a well-fitting mask.

Remember, while a rash persists, but in the absence of a fever or respiratory symptoms:

- Cover all parts of the rash with clothing, gloves, and/or bandages.
- Wear a well-fitting mask to prevent spreading oral and respiratory secretions when interacting with others until the rash and all other symptoms have resolved.
- Masks should fit closely on the face without any gaps along the edges or around the nose and be comfortable when worn properly over the nose and mouth.
- Limit activity to essential activities, e.g., attending class, dining, laundry. (Participation in contact sports, social outings, work, etc., are best deferred until lesions have scabbed over, and new skin covers them, which takes approximately 2-4 weeks)

Someone has tested positive and is in isolation. What should they do?

Individuals with a confirmed case of monkeypox should isolate until all active symptoms, besides the rash, are gone. While in isolation students should follow these recommendations:

- Do not leave your room or home except as required for emergencies or follow-up medical care
- Persons without an essential need to be in the room or home should not visit
- Avoid close contact with others
- Avoid close contact with pets in the home
- Abstain from all sexual activity
- Do not share items that could be contaminated by the lesions (e.g., bed linens, clothing, towels, wash cloths). Do not share drinking glasses or eating utensils
- Routinely clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and items (e.g., counters, light switches) using an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered disinfectant in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- Wear a well-fitting mask or respirator for source control when in close contact with others at home or in your room
- Avoid use of contact lenses to prevent inadvertent infection of the eye
- Avoid shaving areas of the body with lesions, as this can lead to spread of the virus
- If possible, use a separate bathroom if there are others who live in the same household
 - If there is not a separate bathroom in the home, the patient should clean and disinfect surfaces (e.g., counters, toilet seats, faucets) using an [EPA-registered household cleaning product \(List Q\)](#) after using a shared space if the lesions are exposed (e.g.,

showering, toileting, changing bandages covering the lesions). Consider disposable glove use for cleaning and disinfection if lesions are present on the hands

Remember to limit your exposure to others and limit use of spaces, items, and food that are shared with other household/residence hall members.

Should you be concerned about your pets?

People with monkeypox should avoid contact with animals (specifically mammals), including pets.

- If possible, friends or family members should care for healthy animals until the owner has fully recovered.
- Keep any potentially infectious bandages, textiles (e.g., clothes, bedding) and other items away from pets, other domestic animals, and wildlife.
- There is currently no evidence that animals apart from mammals can become infected and transmit monkeypox.

If you notice an animal that had contact with an infected person appearing sick (e.g., lethargy, lack of appetite, coughing, bloating, nasal or eye secretions or crust, fever, pox lesions) contact the owner's veterinarian, state public health veterinarian, or state animal health official.

What student focused information is available?

The following CDC materials are available:

- Infographic: [What You Need to Know about Monkeypox if You are a Teen or Young Adult](#)
- Infographic: [Monkeypox and Safer Sex](#)
- [Safer Sex, Social Gatherings, and Monkeypox](#)
- [Preventing Spread to Others](#)