

MONKEYPOX

How To Care For Yourself And Others

Most people with monkeypox have mild symptoms that go away on their own, without medicines or hospitalization, in 2-4 weeks. Below are some tips on how to care for yourself if you have symptoms and how to prevent spread to others.

Care For Yourself At Home

- Stay home and away from others until all your monkeypox spots, sores, rashes, and scabs have healed with new skin. Scabs can spread monkeypox.
- Do not share a bed, clothing, or towels with anyone. Do not shake out laundry. Wash all clothes, towels, or sheets with laundry detergent before they are used by a different person—regular household detergents are good enough to kill monkeypox.
- If you must leave your home, wear a mask and cover your spots or sores with clothing, gloves and if needed, bandages.
- Keep monkeypox spots or sores clean and dry. Do not scratch or pick spots or sores. You could get the spot or sore infected with another germ if you do. And if you get the monkeypox virus on your hands, you may be able to spread it and a new sore can start.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitizer especially if you touch a sore or spot.
- Try not to touch your eyes and do not wear contacts. If you touch your eyes with fingers that have monkeypox on them, you may cause the monkeypox virus to spread to the eyeball or eyelids. Monkeypox sores on or near the eye can lead to scars that can hurt your vision. If you have monkeypox sores or spots on or near your eyes, see your doctor or clinic soon.
- Do not put strong chemicals such as bleach or peroxide on your skin. If you do, it can weaken your skin's ability to fight infection and heal.
- Drink plenty of water, eat well, and rest as much as you can.

Itching

- Use over the counter anti-itch medicines that you can get at a pharmacy, like Benadryl, Claritin, Allegra, and/or Zyrtec. You also can try putting calamine lotion or Vaseline on your skin.
- Put a cool damp towel on your skin to help soothe it.
- Hot water can make itching worse. Take cool showers or baths instead.

Pain

- Over-the-counter medicines like ibuprofen (Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), or acetaminophen (Tylenol), can help with painful sores.
- For constipation, try over the counter stool softeners such as docusate (Colace).
- If you have rectal (butt) spots or sores or a rash, avoid using enemas. Inserting anything into your anus might cause more sores or spots or cause another infection while your body is trying to heal.
- Try using a Sitz bath, which is a shallow basin you can put in your toilet bowl and fill with warm water, or sit in a shallow bathtub of lukewarm water for at least 10 minutes, several times a day, for genital or butt area sores. You can add Epsom salt to the water for your soak.
- For pain inside your butt, a healthcare provider can prescribe a cream or gel containing lidocaine (a local pain reliever) and hydrocortisone (an anti-inflammatory). Talk to your provider if you need stronger pain relief.



Call Or Go To A Doctor Or Clinic

If you are having:

- Spots of blood out of your anus (“butt”) – (more than a tablespoon)
- Nausea and vomiting that you cannot stop or that is so bad you cannot drink and keep down fluids
- Monkeypox sores or spots on or near your eye, or changes in vision
- Monkeypox spots or sores that are joining together into bigger spots, or are spreading and covering a lot of your body, or are bloody
- Worsening redness or streaking pus around a monkeypox spot
- Having worse pain, fevers, or chills
- Sores in your mouth or throat that are keeping you from eating or drinking
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Confusion, passing out, or severe dizziness with standing, or any other severe symptoms
- If you are not getting better with over-the-counter medications

How To Care For Others And Help Stop The Spread

If it is possible and you feel safe doing so, contact your sex partners and close contacts right away to let them know that they might have been exposed to monkeypox, so that they can get the vaccine and we can stop the spread together. You should contact any sex partners or close contacts you had starting from the first day you had monkeypox symptoms. Your first day of monkeypox symptoms can be when you felt like you had the flu, or a fever, or when your spots sores or rash began, whichever started first.

How Can Monkeypox Be Spread?

People who were vaccinated against monkeypox and get symptoms, like spots, sores or a rash, or a feeling like they have the flu, are also contagious and can spread monkeypox.

Monkeypox can be spread to sex partners or close contacts. A close contact is someone who you may have:

- Sex with, including kissing, cuddling, licking or sharing sex toys,
- Had skin touching or rubbing together,
- Had your face really close to without a mask, or if you coughed or sneezed in someone’s face, or
- Shared bed, towels, or clothes with, without washing the towels and clothes before you used them.

The good news is that monkeypox does not spread as easily as COVID-19. Monkeypox is **not** spread to anyone before you have symptoms. Monkeypox is also not spread by:

- Talking to someone for a brief time, or
- Walking by someone with monkeypox, like in a grocery store.

What Should Your Sex Partners Or Close Contacts Do?



- If they don’t have symptoms, they should try to get the monkeypox vaccine soon - within 14 days of exposure. This can help to stop them from getting monkeypox, or to be less sick if they get it.

To find vaccine, go to sf.gov/information/monkeypox-vaccine-sites

- They should watch for monkeypox symptoms for 21 days after their exposure.
- If they get symptoms, even after they got the monkeypox vaccine, they should stay home and away from others and call their healthcare provider right away.

