

## Keep calm: monkeypox does not spread like COVID-19 or the flu! Here's what you need to know.

Another disease doing the global rounds! Rest assured; there is no reason for panic about the monkeypox virus. We're dealing with a disease that is well known, is rare in humans, doesn't spread like flu or COVID-19 (it needs really close contact to spread) and has a very low fatality rate. Here's the information that matters most.

### *13 monkeypox facts you need to know*

#### *This is not a new disease*

1. Monkeypox is an infection caused by a virus in the same family as smallpox. It was **discovered in 1958** in Denmark when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research. This is why it is called 'monkeypox'.
2. **It's not a new disease. We understand the disease and its treatment well!** The first human case was recorded in 1970. It's affected people in central and west Africa for decades. It's been controlled through simple measures like isolating infected people. There's currently a rise in global cases, outside of the African countries where we usually find the disease. However, this is not the first time monkeypox has been found outside of Africa.

#### *It is a rare infection in humans, with low transmissibility*

3. The **threat or risk to the general population is considered low.**
4. Monkeypox is a **rare viral infection** in humans.
5. There's a **very low likelihood of monkeypox becoming a global pandemic.**

#### *Infection risk is generally low*

6. You **can't get it by being in the same room** as an infected person.
7. Person-to-person transmission **only happens through very close contact**, like **kissing, cuddling** and **sexual contact** with an infected person. You can also get infected through **contact with materials contaminated** by an infected person, like when you share linen, clothes and other household items.
8. So far, it's been most **common in men** who have **sex with men.**
9. Risk factors include having **multiple sexual partners.**

#### *Recovery rates are very good*

10. **Infected people typically recover within two to four weeks.** Most infected people do not need hospital treatment.
11. **It's rarely fatal.** We know of two monkeypox strains. The strain that has now been detected globally is the strain with a case fatality rate of between 1% and 3%.

12. **Treatment is supportive, as with most viral infections.** Most human cases of monkeypox virus infection do not need any specific treatment and the people recover on their own.
13. The **best way to stop the transmission** of monkeypox to others is **for those who are infected to isolate!** That's because an infected person is contagious from the time when they develop a rash or lesions all the way through to the scab stage. Once all scabs have fallen off, a person is no longer contagious.

***Read the [National Institute for Communicable Diseases \(NICD\) FAQ on monkeypox virus.](#)***

### ***Why is a virus that has never managed to spread beyond a few cases outside Africa suddenly causing a spike in cases globally?***

**South Africa:** On 22 June 2022, a monkeypox case was found in Gauteng - a 30-year-old man. He had no recent travel history, implying that the virus is present in the local population. A second case was found on 28 June 2022 - a 32-year-old man living in the Western Cape. He also has no recent travel history. At the time of writing, it was not known if the first and second cases were linked. These people are in isolation and the NICD is tracing their contacts to see if anyone else is infected.

**Globally:** Until May 2022, monkeypox hadn't caused any sizeable outbreaks beyond the African countries where the disease is endemic. On [7 May](#), a case of monkeypox was confirmed in a person who had travelled from the United Kingdom to Nigeria and back; this case was immediately isolated.

The World Health Organization ([WHO reports that](#) from the beginning of May to 25 June, 3040 monkeypox cases had been reported from 47 countries.

The [WHO adds that](#), "*Transmission is occurring in many countries that have not previously reported cases of monkeypox, and the highest numbers of cases are currently reported from countries in the WHO European Region.*"

Also, "*Confirmation of one case of monkeypox, in a country, is considered an outbreak. The unexpected appearance of monkeypox in several regions in the initial absence of epidemiological links to areas that have historically reported monkeypox, suggests that there may have been undetected transmission for some time. WHO assesses the risk at the global level as moderate considering this is the first time that many monkeypox cases and clusters are reported concurrently in many countries in widely disparate WHO geographical areas, balanced against the fact that mortality has remained low in the current outbreak.*"

### ***What are the symptoms of monkeypox?***

[According to South Africa's National Institute for Communicable Diseases \(NICD\)](#), monkeypox symptoms include fever and general flu-like symptoms, such as headache, muscle aches, backache, chills and exhaustion. These symptoms are followed by the eruption of a blister-like rash on the skin. The rash would be the most telling sign of monkeypox.

The time from infection to symptoms (incubation period) for monkeypox is on average **7 to 14 days** but can range from **5 to 21 days**.

Within **1 to 3 days** after the start of the disease, blister-like lesions (similar to when we get chickenpox) develop on the face and the extremities, including on the soles of the feet and palms of the hands, and possibly also on other parts of the body. These lesions go through several stages before scabbing over and healing.

### ***What should you do if you think you have monkeypox?***

The NICD says people with possible, probable or confirmed monkeypox should avoid close contact with others until all lesions have healed and the scabs dried off. This includes staying at home and self-isolating (unless you need medical assessment or care - also for other urgent health and wellbeing issues). Isolation stops transmission to others.

- - Kids and immunocompromised adults may experience more severe forms of the disease so it's important to limit their exposure to infected individuals.

### ***How does monkeypox spread from animals to humans and between humans?***

**People can get monkeypox virus from contact with an infected animal, human or materials that are contaminated with the virus.**

- - **In endemic countries**, the monkeypox virus may be spread from handling infected bush meat, an animal bite or scratch, body fluids and contaminated objects. Monkeypox infection has been found in many animal species in Africa. However, some species of rodents (not monkeys as the name implies) are suspected of being the main disease carrier.
- - **In non-endemic countries** persons are most likely to be exposed to monkeypox through contact with an individual who is already sick with monkeypox.

The virus infects humans through broken skin, the respiratory tract or the mucous membranes (eyes, nose and mouth).

Cases of monkeypox spreading through animals outside of the endemic areas are very rare but may involve the exotic pet trade or potentially through contact with infected animal-derived materials, such as skins and leather.

***Don't rely on google for information about monkeypox; go to the NICD's website for the facts.***

*Keep up to date on monkeypox in South Africa **on the NICD website.***