

Monkeypox update

Monkeypox is a rare infectious disease, but there are an increasing number of cases in the UK at the moment. This is being diagnosed in London in 4 out of 5 cases and almost all cases (99%) are in men who have sex with men. Only a handful of cases have been in women.

Monkeypox is a viral infection usually associated with travel to West Africa but in this outbreak in the UK at the moment people have only travelled to Europe, or not travelled at all.

It is usually a mild self-limiting illness, passed on by very close contact with someone with monkeypox and most people recover within a few weeks.

The virus can be passed on if there is close contact between people and the risk to the UK population is low.

Monkeypox can affect anyone, and it can be passed on through close physical contact like kissing, skin-to-skin, sex or sharing things like clothing, bedding and towels.

However, recent cases have been detected in gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. We advise this group in particular to be alert to any unusual rashes or lesions on any part of their body, especially their genitalia, and to contact a sexual health service if they have concerns.

If you have concerns please isolate from others until you have spoken to a professional. Your call or discussion will be treated sensitively and confidentially.

Signs and symptoms

- RASH: Recent unexpected/unusual spots, ulcers or blisters anywhere on your body
- Fever
- Headaches
- Muscle aches and back ache
- Chills and exhaustion
- Swollen glands
- Mouth sores (oral mucocutaneous infection)
- Pain and bleeding from the bottom (proctitis)

Within 1 to 5 days after the appearance of fever, a rash develops, often beginning on the face then spreading to other parts of the body. The rash changes and goes through different stages before finally forming a scab which later falls off.

Some pictures of the rash are shown below:



An individual is contagious until all the scabs have fallen off and there is intact skin underneath. The scabs may also contain infectious virus material.

Contact a sexual health clinic if you have a rash with blisters and you've been either:

- to West or Central Africa in the past 3 weeks
- if you have travelled in the last 3 weeks and had sex while you were away
- told by someone you have had sex with in the last 3 weeks that they have tested positive for monkey pox, or they have been tested and the result is not ready yet

Tell the person you speak to if you've had close contact with someone who has or might have monkeypox.

Do not go to a sexual health clinic without contacting us first on the number below. Stay at home and avoid close contact with other people until you've been told what to do.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust Sexual Health contact numbers:

- Rubin Clinic, Maidstone Hospital - 07955 434087
- Riverside Clinic, Gravesham Community Hospital - 07955 434081

Please note, these phonedlines are staffed Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.