

Monkeypox FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

Monkeypox is a relatively rare virus in Canada and has been reported in many communities across the country, including in Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia). We have compiled information from the Governments of Nova Scotia and Canada, along with queer organizations, sexual health centres, recent news report, published scientific research, and other public health authorities in the country. The information in this document is meant to help people in our community understand what's going on, what to look for, and where to get care. We are actively following the evolving monkeypox situation and continue to update our resources, including this FAQs document, accordingly.

Contents

BASICS	2
TRANSMISSION	3
SYMPTOMS	4
TESTING	5
VACCINES & TREATMENT	6
PREVENTION	8
MONKEYPOX & HIV	8
RESOURCES (FOR MORE INFORMATION)	10

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BASICS

> What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a disease caused by the monkeypox virus. The monkeypox virus belongs to the same family as the smallpox virus, but symptoms are milder, and monkeypox is rarely fatal.

> Why is there so much talk about monkeypox in Canada lately?

While not a new virus, cases of monkeypox in Canada have traditionally been rare, mostly affecting people who have travelled to regions where monkeypox is endemic.

However, in mid-May 2022, cases of monkeypox were reported in Europe and North America (Canada and the US) in people with no history of travel to endemic regions. This sparked the declaration of monkeypox outbreaks and public health emergencies by some governments and health organizations.

This could explain why many of us in Canada are hearing about monkeypox a lot more now compared to before.

> What is the current state of monkeypox in Canada?

As of October 7, 2022, there are 1,411 confirmed cases of monkeypox in Canada. There have been no reported deaths in the country. In Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia), there has been one confirmed case of monkeypox.

Stay up to date on monkeypox numbers in Canada by checking the Government of Canada's [website on the monkeypox outbreak](#).

> Who is monkeypox affecting?

Monkeypox can affect anyone of any race, sexual orientation or gender identity. Viruses like monkeypox don't discriminate so it's important for

everyone to be aware and take precautions to prevent the transmission of the monkeypox virus.

Most cases, however, have been reported in communities of gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM). The virus seems to be passing through close personal and sexual networks.

Furthermore, gbMSM tend to be really good at taking care of themselves and getting tested regularly for sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections. This could have led to early detection of the virus and explain why it's also visible in these communities.

TRANSMISSION

> How does monkeypox get passed along?

Generally, monkeypox isn't transmitted easily between people, but anyone who has close contact with a person who has monkeypox is at risk for infection. Monkeypox can be transmitted through prolonged periods of close face-to-face or body contact with someone who has the virus (e.g., touching or rubbing up against skin with the infectious rash or scabs). The virus can also be transmitted through respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing, talking or kissing, and through touching contaminated surfaces or items such as bedding, towels or clothes.

> Is monkeypox a sexually transmitted infection (STI)?

Monkeypox is not sexually transmitted, or otherwise known as a STI. While the close skin-to-skin contact during certain sexual activities (e.g., kissing, touching or rubbing) may put you at a greater risk of exposure to monkeypox, it is not transmitted through bodily fluids like cum.

SYMPTOMS

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

Monkeypox symptoms usually develop 5 to 21 days after exposure to the virus and can last 2 to 4 weeks. Symptoms happen in two stages:

The first stage of symptoms can include:

- Fever and chills.
- Headache.
- Muscle/joint aches/pain.
- Back pain.
- Fatigue.
- Swollen lymph nodes.

The second stage of symptoms usually start 1 to 3 days after the first stage and can include a rash or sores.

Sores can manifest in a person's mouth (similar to a canker sore), on their face, around their genitals or in and around their butt. The sores change appearance over time until they eventually form a scab and fall off.

> **What should I do if I have symptoms?**

If you begin to notice a new or developing rash, sores or other monkeypox symptoms, you should take precautions and contact your healthcare provider or call 811. The next best option is contacting your local sexual health clinic. A healthcare provider will work with you to determine if you need to go for further testing.

> **How long am I contagious for if I have monkeypox?**

Typically, you're considered contagious from the onset of first symptoms until the scabs from the sores fall off on their own and your skin is healed. If you have monkeypox, public health staff will provide you with guidance on

self-isolation and monitoring based on your unique situation.

TESTING

> **How can I get tested for monkeypox?**

If you notice a new or developing rash, sores or other monkeypox symptoms, you should contact your healthcare provider or local sexual health clinic. Alternatively, you can contact your [local public health office](#). If you have to be around other people, take precautions like washing your hands, wearing a mask and covering any sores with a large bandage or cloth.

Testing involves swabbing the monkeypox sores. To get a decent sample, multiple sores may be needed. The sample is then sent to the provincial microbiology lab for confirmatory testing and results. Results should be available within 24 to 48 hours after getting tested.

Monkeypox testing is not available as part of routine STI testing.

> **I tested positive for monkeypox. What now?**

It's going to be ok. It's not your fault that you have monkeypox. Viruses don't discriminate; anyone can get monkeypox.

Don't panic. The current monkeypox strain is mild and symptoms usually clear up on their own. The pain you have will most likely depend on where the sores are located on your body.

If you have monkeypox, public health staff will provide you with guidance on self-isolation and monitoring based on your unique situation. Until then, take precautions like isolating from others, washing your hands, wearing a mask or covering any sores with a large bandage or clothing if you must be around other people.

VACCINES & TREATMENT

> **Where can I get the monkeypox vaccine?**

The same vaccine for smallpox is effective against monkeypox. Currently in Nova Scotia, people at highest risk of getting monkeypox can get their first dose of the vaccine before they are exposed.

The only clinic where you can get a monkeypox vaccine right now is at the Halifax Sexual Health Centre, located at 7071 Bayers Road, Suite 203, in Kjiptuk (Halifax). You will need to book an appointment before getting the vaccine; **this is not a walk-in service.**

The eligibility criteria for the vaccine is as follows:

People who identify as cis or trans queer men, Two-Spirit or non-binary, or those who have sexual contact with someone who is, and one of the following:

- Two or more sexual partners in the last three months.
- Have had a sexually transmitted infection in the last three months.
- Have been to a bath house, sex club or a similar event in the last three months, or is planning to.
- Had anonymous sex in the last three months, or is planning to.
- Engaged as a worker or a client in sex work, or is planning to.

To book your vaccine appointment online, you'll need a valid Nova Scotia health card. If you don't have a health card or need help with booking your appointment, you can call 902-455-9656 ext. 0.

Book your online appointment here:

<https://novascotia.flow.canimmunize.ca/en/monkeypox-booking>

> **What are the vaccine side effects?**

The monkeypox vaccine is being given as a single needle injection on the underside of your arm, just under the skin. Most people don't have a strong

reaction to the vaccine. Side effects are similar to those of other vaccines. Some people have experienced/reported tenderness of the arm, feeling sore, light bruising or swelling, a small bump or rash around where you get the needle, feeling tired, headaches or muscle pain and nausea. Side effects typically go away within a week.

If you do have a strong reaction, or if the side effects don't go away after a while, contact your healthcare provider, local public health office, or dial 8-1-1.

➤ **Can I get the monkeypox vaccine if I already received a vaccine for smallpox?**

According to current Nova Scotia public health guidelines, for individuals who have documented evidence (e.g., vaccination record) of receiving a smallpox vaccine in the past and sustained a high-risk exposure to a probable or confirmed case of monkeypox, a single dose of the monkeypox vaccine can be offered as a 'booster' dose.

➤ **How is monkeypox treated?**

Taking care of yourself while you have monkeypox is important. If you have monkeypox, symptoms can be controlled by taking fever reducing medications (acetaminophen/Tylenol, ibuprofen/Advil), drinking plenty of fluids to stay hydrated, resting, and using wound care. It's also important to take your regular medications at the usual time unless advised otherwise and to wash your hands frequently and especially after caring for lesions.

Monkeypox symptoms usually clear up on their own. In extreme cases TPOXX, a Health Canada authorized treatment for monkeypox, may be prescribed by a healthcare provider to treat monkeypox infections.

➤ **Lesion care (for sores):**

- Apply Vaseline on the lesion and cover it as soon as it appears (when small like a zit).

- Keep the lesions covered with a bandage to promote fast healing.
- Avoid scratching or picking the lesions (let them scab so they can fall off normally).

PREVENTION

> **What are some ways to prevent the transmission of monkeypox?**

Generally, monkeypox isn't transmitted easily between people, but anyone who has close contact with a person who has monkeypox is at risk for infection.

Some ways you can prevent the transmission of monkeypox include:

- Washing your hands.
- Wearing a mask.
- Covering coughs/sneezes.
- Limiting sex partners.
- Self-isolating if you have monkeypox or monkeypox symptoms.
- Covering sores up with a large bandage if you must be in contact with other people or you do have sex.
- Having virtual sex with no in-person contact.
- Talking to your close contacts/sex partners about any recent symptoms or unexplained rashes or sores.
- Exchanging contact info with sex partners for contact tracing.

MONKEYPOX & HIV

> **I have HIV. What should I be aware of?**

For people living with HIV, you may have questions or concerns that are completely valid and deserve to be answered. We all deserve care and to be safe, and that includes you, too!

Like many infections, the impact of monkeypox can be worse for people with weakened immune systems. Monkeypox doesn't appear to be any more severe in people living with HIV who are on effective treatment with a suppressed viral load. However, it's recommended that you continue to follow public health guidelines and actively do your best at using prevention methods for monkeypox.

> **Is the monkeypox vaccine safe for people living with HIV?**

The short answer is yes! The monkeypox vaccine is a live but non-replicating virus. It contains a modified virus and cannot make you sick. The vaccine has been used in clinical trials with people living with HIV (CD4 count of equal or greater than 100 cells/mm³) and was found to be safe, effective, and it produces an immune response. However, there may be some limitations or other factors that need to be considered. If you're considering getting the vaccine it's recommended that you talk to your healthcare provider before getting it.

***** Monkeypox is an evolving situation in Canada and globally and new information is released often. Did this FAQs document leave out anything you were hoping to be answered? If so, please email gmhc@acns.ns.ca with your question(s) and we'll try our absolute best to find answers for you. *****

RESOURCES (FOR MORE INFORMATION)

- BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC):
 - **Recommendations for Two-Spirit, gay, bisexual, trans and queer communities (2SGBTQ+):** <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/monkeypox#2SGBTQ>
- CATIE: <https://www.catie.ca/catie-news/an-outbreak-of-monkeypox-in-canada-and-other-countries>
- Gay Men’s Sexual Health Alliance (GMSH), Ontario:
<https://gmshe.ca/mpx/>
- Government of Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/monkeypox.html>
- Government of Nova Scotia: <https://novascotia.ca/monkeypox/>
 - **Monkeypox management and response:**
<https://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/cdc/documents/Monkeypox.pdf>
- Government of Yukon: <https://yukon.ca/en/health-and-wellness/health-concerns-diseases-and-conditions/learn-about-monkeypox#Resources>
- National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI):
<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/guidance-immunization-monkeypox/guidance-immunization-monkeypox-en.pdf>
- If you have monkeypox: <https://www.igotmpox.com/>
- World Health Organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/monkeypox>