



Facts about the monkeypox virus

What is monkeypox virus?

Monkeypox is a virus transmitted to humans from animals with symptoms similar to those seen in the past in smallpox patients, although it is clinically less severe.

Where is the virus common?

- The virus is so far common in central and west African countries but in recent weeks, cases have also been reported in European countries including UK, USA, Canada Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Italy.

Which animals mostly host the monkeypox virus?

- Evidence of monkeypox virus infection has been found in many animals including rope squirrels, tree squirrels, Gambian poached rats, dormice and different species of monkeys.

How does it spread?

- Initial transmission is mainly animal-to-human which occurs primarily from direct contact with broken skin or mucous membranes.
- It may possibly be transmitted through the respiratory tract or blood and body fluids.
- Eating inadequately cooked meat and other animal products of infected animals is a possible risk factor.
- People living in or near forested areas may have indirect or low-level exposure to infected animals.

What symptoms should I be on the lookout for?

- From infection to onset of symptoms of monkeypox, symptoms will likely present from 6 to 13 days but can range from 5 to 21 days.
- Within the first 5 days, you might experience, fever, intense headache, swelling of the lymph nodes, back pain, muscle aches and intense lack of energy.
- Once these symptoms manifest the next phase is skin rashes which begin 1 -3 days after presentation of fever. The rashes tend to be more concentrated on the face, palms of the hands, soles of the feet, genitals and the eye cornea.

How long do the symptoms last?

- Monkeypox symptoms last from 2 to 4 weeks.

Does vaccination help prevent contracting the virus?

- Vaccination against smallpox proved to be 85 per cent protective in the past against monkeypox.
- However, due to discontinuation of this vaccine in the 1970s after smallpox was eradicated, children and persons younger than 40 and 50 years of age today may be more at risk of contracting the disease.

How is it diagnosed?

- Just like Covid-19, monkeypox is diagnosed through a Polymerase chain reaction (PCR). This is the preferred laboratory test given its accuracy and sensitivity.

What are the treatment options available for monkeypox?

- Patients should be offered fluids and food to maintain adequate nutritional status.
- Vaccination against smallpox is also effective in preventing monkeypox.

How can I protect myself against contacting Monkeypox?

- Awareness creation to sensitise the public on monkeypox and its transmission is important. In the past, most human infections resulted from animal-to-human transmission.
- This current outbreak is unusual as the patients do not have a history of contact with animals or travel to endemic regions.
- Human-to-human transmission occurs by face-to-face exposure, direct physical contact and contact with contaminated materials such as clothing or beddings.

