



## Hidalgo County Health and Human Services Department

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# Monkeypox Health Advisory

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## Background

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the Monkeypox virus with cases usually occurring in Central and West Africa. It is an Orthopoxvirus that is closely related to the virus that causes Smallpox. In previous outbreaks, Monkeypox has spread from animals to humans with reservoirs including rope and tree squirrels, prairie dogs, and monkeys.

Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle aches, back aches, lymphadenopathy, chills, and exhaustion followed by a rash within 1-3 days after the appearance of fever. The rash typically begins on the face then spreads to other parts of the body. Atypical presentation would consist of the rash being the first or only symptom to develop. The illness can last 2 to 4 weeks with the contrarious period ending once the lesions have scabbed, fallen off and new skin appears.

Monkeypox can spread primarily through direct contact with infectious sores, scabs, respiratory droplets, mucous secretions, or contact with contaminated materials such as bedding. The current outbreak has shown that close intimate contact between people, wrestling, kissing, touching, hugging, or sex have been common exposures.

The incubation period for Monkeypox us usually 7 to 14 days but can range from 5 to 21 days. Anyone exposed to Monkeypox should be monitor for symptoms for 21 days.

## Testing

There are five commercial laboratory companies with the capacity of conducting 10,000 orthopoxvirus tests a week. These labs include Aegis Science, LabCorp, Mayo Clinic Laboratories, Quest Diagnostics and Sonic Healthcare. Testing is also still available through the Texas Department of State Health Services Laboratory for patients who meet the state's testing criteria. Providers are encouraged to conduct differential diagnosis when testing for Monkeypox.

## Treatment

Information for Healthcare Providers on Obtaining and Using [TPOXX \(Tecovirimat\)](#) for Treatment of Monkeypox has been made available on the CDC website

The JYNNEOS vaccine is licensed by the FDA for use in the prevention of smallpox or Monkeypox in people ages 18 years and older. This is a two-dose vaccine given 28 days apart and are considered fully vaccinated about two weeks after their second shot. Post exposure prophylaxis is recommended to occur within the first 4 days of exposure to potentially prevent disease.

There are limited supplies of the federal JYNNEOS vaccine. At this time, vaccines are only available to individuals identified as close contacts to a confirmed Monkeypox case.

### **Reporting**

Monkeypox has been designated immediately notifiable. If you have a suspected case of Monkeypox or submit a specimen to your commercial lab for testing, please fax reports along with progress notes to Hidalgo County Health and Human Services Epidemiology and Surveillance Division at (956) 318-2431. For questions please contact (956)318-2426. For additional information visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/>



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Attached is the Monkeypox (MPX) case criteria to help determine if a clinical suspicion would meet case definition. You can also find it here: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/clinicians/case-definition.html>

It is also recommended to refer to the CDC MPX website and the latest CDC Health Alert (attached) for additional information: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/us-map.html>

### Some helpful information to know

#### *Information to collect from PATIENTS/PROVIDERS:*

- Travel history (location, dates, within and outside of US, return to US, etc.)
- Symptom onset date
- Disease/rash progression (Fever and rash occur in nearly all people infected with MPX. MPX is usually macules to papules to vesicles to pustules to scabs)
  - Was Fever present?
  - Lymphadenopathy?
  - Are lesions itchy/painful?
  - Are lesions umbilicated?
  - Any ocular lesions or lesions in the mouth?
  - Are the lesions on the body parts in the same stage – i.e. are all the lesions on the arm at the same stage or are all the lesions on the legs at the same stage? Or are there differing stages on the same body part – i.e. are there differing stages on the legs?
  - Was there RECENT contact with ill persons (especially persons with rash or who have traveled prior to contact)
- Sexual partner history and last time of sexual contact
- Vaccination history (specifically *varicella*, smallpox, and measles)
- DIFFERENTIAL Diagnoses: Other positive lab tests for OR history of varicella, herpes, syphilis, etc. (i.e. have other etiologies been addressed/considered)?
- Does rash improve with antihistamines?
- Was there history of antibiotic/new medications prescribed right before rash onset?



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- Exposure to exotic animals, pet rodents or products made from exotic animals (game meat, creams, and lotions)?
- Are there pictures of the rash that can be shared with the local health department?
- Is the patient currently hospitalized?
- Is the patient immunocompromised (if yes, please specify)?
- Is the patient pregnant or breastfeeding?
- If there is still a suspicion of MPX after gathering this information, please **ask physician/patient to send photos of rash and lesions** to:  
[Cynthia.gutierrez@hchd.org](mailto:Cynthia.gutierrez@hchd.org), [amy.gonzalez@hchd.org](mailto:amy.gonzalez@hchd.org), or [epi@hchd.org](mailto:epi@hchd.org)
- Fill out the DSHS investigation form (attached) as best as you can. Send to:

Hidalgo County Health Department,  
Epidemiology and Surveillance Division  
Fax: (956) 318-2431

**ENCRYPTED Email (HIPAA):**

[Cynthia.gutierrez@hchd.org](mailto:Cynthia.gutierrez@hchd.org)

[Amy.gonzalez@hchd.org](mailto:Amy.gonzalez@hchd.org)

[Epi@hchd.org](mailto:Epi@hchd.org)

*Specimen collection information:*

1. Notify the **Hidalgo County Health Department, Epidemiology and Surveillance Division at (956) 318-2426 Ext. 7348 (Cynthia) and 7332 (Amy)** for guidance when suspecting a Monkey Pox infection to ensure meeting CDC/DSHS guidelines and criteria are met.
2. IF criteria is met for a potential Monkey Pox infection, notify the **Hidalgo County Health Department, Epidemiology and Surveillance Division** to get approval for testing and a TEST CASE NUMBER.
3. IF criteria is met for a potential Monkey Pox infection and approval and test case number for testing has been received, collect multiple specimens for preliminary and confirmatory testing as follows:
  - a. Note: At this time, **only dry swabs are acceptable to the LRN's.**



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- b. More than one lesion should be sampled, preferably from different locations on the body and/or from lesions with differing appearances.
  - i. Collect at least 2 swabs from multiple lesions (i.e. provider selects multiple lesions to swab, and collects at least 2 swabs from each lesion - one swab will be for LRN and the other for CDC, if needed)
- c. Vigorously swab or brush lesion with two separate **sterile dry polyester or Dacron swabs (NO cotton swabs)**. If possible, unroof an intact pustule, insert the swab in the fluid and scrape the bottom of the lesion.
4. Place each swab into a separate dry sterile container, the end of the swab can be broken off if needed to fit into tube. (Recommended: 15mL conical tube). **Do not add or store in viral or universal transport media.**
5. The specimen form must include both the date and time of collection.
6. Submitting clients are responsible to ensure delivery of specimen to the laboratory.
7. The specimen tube must include the following information:
  - a. Patient Name (Full)
  - b. Date of Birth
  - c. Collection Date and Time
  - d. Collection Site (i.e. face, neck, etc.)
6. Refrigerate (2°C to 8°C) or freeze (-20°C or lower) specimens within an hour after collection. Store refrigerated specimens for up to 7 days and frozen specimens for up to 60 days from time of collection.
7. Send refrigerated specimens within 7 days of collection as a **Category B agent** using cold packs and delivered to the laboratory at 2°C to 8°C. Specimens that are greater than 8°C upon receipt will be rejected.
8. Ship frozen specimens within 60 days of collection as a **Category B agent** using dry ice. Specimens that are not frozen upon receipt will be rejected.
9. Notify the **Hidalgo County Health Department, Epidemiology and Surveillance Division at (956) 318-2426 Ext. 7348 (Cynthia) and 7332 (Amy)** when a specimen has been collected to receive instructions on where to ship the sample.

Let us know if you have any additional questions.