

# Mpox:

## What Everyone Needs to Know to Prevent the Spread



The current mpox outbreak is impacting the LGBTQ+ community, with most cases being detected among gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men, but not exclusively. Anyone can get and spread mpox. Blaming any one community may harm public health efforts and cause providers to miss recognizing mpox in other people.



### What is mpox and how does it spread?

- Mpox is a rare but potentially serious disease that is caused by the pox virus. It is from the same family of viruses as the smallpox virus.
- **Mpox does not spread easily from person to person.** People can become infected after having close, personal, often skin-to-skin contact with a person who has mpox. This includes:



**Having direct contact with a mpox rash, scabs or body fluids** from a person infected with mpox.



**Touching or using items that someone with mpox has recently used** such as, bedding, towels, toothbrushes, and sex toys.



**Having sex of any kind** (oral, anal, and vaginal) or **touching genitals or the anus** of a person with mpox.



**Having prolonged face-to-face contact.** This can include kissing, hugging, snuggling, and sleeping in the same bed.



### What are the symptoms?

- Mpox symptoms usually start 4 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Mpox usually includes a new, unexplained rash. Other symptoms may include:
  - Fever
  - Swollen lymph nodes
  - Muscle aches
  - Headache
- The mpox rash usually develops within one to three days after fever. Some people may have a rash or sores first, followed by other symptoms, or only develop a rash.
- The rash may be near or on the genitals, anus, mouth, and on other common areas of the body. It may look similar to syphilis, herpes, or other common skin rashes.



## How can it be prevented?

- **Increased skin-to-skin contact increases your risk of getting mpox. Consider how much skin-to-skin contact is likely to occur when going to social gatherings.** Be mindful of activities like kissing and sharing drinks. Avoid touching any rashes or sores on others and stay home if you are sick or have any rashes or sores.
- **The Wisconsin Department of Health Services recommends vaccination for:**
  - People who had known exposures to someone with mpox.
  - People with certain risk factors who are more likely to have been exposed to mpox, even if they have not had documented exposure to someone with confirmed mpox.

**Check if the mpox vaccine is recommended for you and where you can make an appointment by visiting the [DHS Mpox Vaccine website](#).**

### Lower your risk if you or your partner have mpox:

- **If you feel safe doing so, talk to your partner** about recent illness and be aware of any rash that may be on you or your partner's body.
- **Avoid having sex if you or your partner(s) have a new or unexplained rash.** If you or your partner get mpox and choose to have sex, lower your risk of spreading mpox by:
  - Having virtual sex or masturbate together without touching each other.
  - Avoiding kissing and prolonged face-to-face contact.
  - Washing your hands, sex toys, and all fabrics (bedding, towels, clothing) after having sex.

### Lower your risk at places where mpox is likely to spread:

- **Think about how much close, personal, skin-to-skin contact may happen at events you attend,** such as raves, parties, or festivals.
- **Wearing less clothing may increase the risk of having skin-to-skin contact with others and being exposed to mpox.** Avoid any rash you may see on others and minimize skin-to-skin contact.



## Is there a treatment?

Most people who get mpox will recover in 2 to 4 weeks. Antiviral medications that have been used to treat smallpox can be used to treat mpox.

