

Monkeypox Fact Sheet

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare viral disease. It occurs mostly in central and western Africa. It is called “monkeypox” because it was first found in 1958 in laboratory monkeys.

How do people get infected with monkeypox?

People can get monkeypox if they are bitten by an animal that is infected by the virus. They can also get it if they touch the blood, body fluids or rash of an infected animal.

Is there monkeypox in the United States?

In June 2003, several cases of monkeypox were reported in the United States. This was the first time monkeypox was ever reported in this country. Most of these people got sick after having contact with pet prairie dogs that were infected with the virus.

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

About 12 days after people are infected with the virus, they will get a fever, headache, muscle aches, and backache. Their lymph nodes will swell and they will feel tired. One to three days (or longer) after the fever starts, a rash will appear. The rash develops into raised bumps filled with fluid. It often starts on the face and spreads, but it can start on other parts of the body, too. The bumps go through several stages before they get crusty, scab over, and fall off. The illness usually lasts for two to four weeks.

How soon do infected people get sick?

It takes an average of 12 days from the time a person is exposed to the virus to when they get sick.

Can monkeypox be spread from person to person?

Yes. It can be spread through large respiratory droplets after long periods of face-to-face contact. It can also be spread by touching body fluids of a sick person or by touching objects such as bedding or clothing contaminated with the virus.

How is monkeypox treated?

No specific treatment exists for monkeypox. Anti-viral drugs are being assessed as a treatment option.

Can you die from monkeypox?

In Africa, monkeypox has killed between 1 percent and 10 percent of people who get it. However, the risk would probably be lower in the United States where nutrition and access to medical care are better.

How can monkeypox be prevented?

There is probably some protection from the smallpox vaccine. Therefore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests that anyone caring for infected people or animals get a smallpox vaccination to protect against the chance of infection. The CDC also suggests that people who have had close contact with animals or other people confirmed to have monkeypox be vaccinated. Vaccinations are effective up to 14 days post-exposure.