

Monkeypox (hMPXV) information for schools



You may have heard about monkeypox (hMPXV) and have concerns for how it may impact your school community as we start the 2022-2023 school year. While there have been cases nationally and in Oregon, at this time the risk of monkeypox to children and adolescents is low and we believe that schools will be low-risk settings for transmission.

We now have heightened attention and an emotional reaction to infectious diseases so parents and school employees may have concerns about monkeypox. Here is our current understanding and guidance for children and schools.

What is monkeypox (hMPXV)?

hMPXV (the human version of monkeypox) is part of the same family of viruses that causes smallpox. Monkeypox is much harder to catch, and it is not as severe as smallpox. Almost everyone recovers in 2-4 weeks without treatment.

Local information

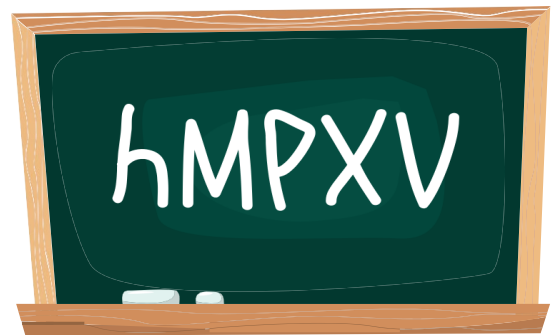
The first case of monkeypox was confirmed in Oregon on June 16, 2022. Almost all of the cases in Oregon have been men above the age of 20, most in their 30s. For the most current case counts in Oregon, please visit <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/monkeypox/Pages/index.aspx>.

Children and monkeypox

At this time, we believe the risk of monkeypox to children and adolescents is low. We know that children under eight, children with eczema and other skin conditions, and children with immunocompromising conditions may be at increased risk of severe disease if they contract monkeypox.

How is monkeypox spread?

This virus does not spread as easily as COVID, measles or chickenpox. Monkeypox is most often spread by prolonged skin-to-skin contact with the rash/sores of an infected person. Right now the virus is mostly spreading through intimate or sexual contact, although it can spread through close caregiving activities or household contact. The virus can also spread through sharing towels, clothing, utensils or other objects used by someone with the virus, although this type of spread is much less common.



Unlike COVID-19, people with monkeypox can only spread the virus while they have symptoms or sores that have not completely healed. Anyone can get the virus, but there are steps people can take to prevent getting and spreading the infection.

Preventing getting the disease

Messages that we share with our children to protect them from any illness will also protect them from monkeypox:

- Avoid touching other people's rashes.
- Avoid touching other people's blood and other bodily fluids.
- Avoid sharing clothes, dishes, utensils and linens with other people.
- Wash your hands frequently, especially after using the restroom and before eating.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover any new lesions or rashes and consult with a health care provider.

While we know monkeypox has a small possibility of being transmitted by shared surfaces and items, cleaning and disinfection practices implemented by schools before and during COVID-19 are sufficient to prevent surface transmission. During the current worldwide outbreak of monkeypox, people are not getting infected by touching surfaces in schools, buses or public buildings. They are not getting infected by casual encounters with friends and community members.

If a household member has monkeypox, follow CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting:

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/if-sick/home-disinfection.html>

Symptoms and testing

Rash is the most common monkeypox symptom, and it can look similar to rashes seen more commonly in children, including rashes caused by chickenpox, herpes, allergic skin rashes and hand, foot, and mouth disease. The rash can start as a red spot or bump that develops into a blister or pustule, then can become an ulcer and scab over. These spots can be scattered around the body or on just one part of the body. Other common symptoms can include fatigue, fever, chills, headache and swollen lymph nodes, but not everyone will develop these symptoms.

If you or your child get symptoms, especially if you have been in contact with someone with the infection, isolate yourself at home until you can connect with a healthcare provider to decide if you need testing. Keep any new rash or sores covered with clothing and/or bandages until you can get checked out by a healthcare provider. Wear a mask around others.

Testing for monkeypox is widely available. Most health care providers have the supplies and personal protective equipment to complete testing.

Public health efforts

We will contact people who are diagnosed with monkeypox and provide information about next steps. We will also contact people who are identified as close contacts and provide information about what to watch for and what to do if they develop symptoms. If a child is identified as a close contact or tests positive, we will help them access care and consider whether a vaccine or treatment is needed.

Washington County Public Health will regularly communicate with local school leadership to share current information and to receive updates about potential monkeypox situations in schools. If a school does experience an exposure, we will work closely to identify risks and provide guidance. Visit <https://wcor.us/monkeypox> for more information.