



## HEALTH ALERT

### Key Messages

- **Two cases of MPOX were confirmed in Humboldt County this week.**
- **The two cases do not appear to be linked at this time. Both cases were most likely contracted in Humboldt or surrounding counties.**
- **Recent cases have had an atypical presentation with lesions in the genital or perianal region, in the absence of prodromal symptoms.**
- **Consider MPOX in your differential when the following are present:**
  - **Deep-seated, firm, well-circumscribed lesions – see “clinical evaluation” below**
  - **Travel to Western or Central Africa or travel to countries with new cases identified in the past 21 days**
  - **Contact with someone who has a similar rash or with a confirmed or suspected case of MPOX.**
- **Cases are more common in men who have sex with men, but are associated with heterosexual transmission and close skin-to-skin non-sexual contact.**
- **Patients with suspected MPOX should be masked and placed in a single room with droplet and contact precautions. Note: N95 or higher is required.**
- **If you suspect an MPOX case, providers must contact their local Public Health Department at (707) 268-2182 for consultation and testing approval.**

Dear Humboldt County Providers,

February 20, 2026

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Center for Disease Control (CDC) released health alerts in response to recent cases of monkeypox in non-endemic countries including the United States, Canada, UK as well as other parts of Europe and Australia. Historically, MPOX cases in the United States have occurred due to international travel and importation of animals. Spread of MPOX within California has been occurring since June 2022.

MPOX is a rare zoonotic infection caused by the monkeypox virus which belongs to the Orthopoxvirus genus (including smallpox). MPOX, less severe than smallpox, is endemic to many Central and West African countries (particularly Nigeria) and is spread to humans from infected humans, animals and materials contaminated with the virus. In the U.S., it is spread primarily by close skin-to-skin contact.

### Transmission:

- Incubation period ranges from 5 to 21 days, with an average of 7 to 14 days.
- Human-to-human transmission occurs through large respiratory droplets, direct contact with body fluids or lesion material, or contact with fomites (clothing, bedding, etc.)



- Infectious period starts 4 days prior to the onset of symptoms and lasts until lesions have crusted, scabs have healed, and fresh skin has formed underneath.

### **Clinical Evaluation**

- Classical presentation of MPOX disease includes a flu-like illness (fever, chills, lymphadenopathy, malaise, headache, and muscle aches) for 1-3 days, followed by a characteristic rash with deep-seated, well circumscribed lesions, often with center umbilication progressing through sequential stages from macules, papules, vesicles, pustules, and scabs. Lesions usually occur on the face, arms, legs, palms, and soles.
- In many of the recent cases, prodromal symptoms have not always occurred, and lesions were often identified in the genital and perianal region. Cases have involved men who have sex with men (MSM) who may not have had a history of travel to an endemic country. Because of this atypical presentation, symptoms of MPOX may be mistaken for other infections including syphilis and herpes simplex virus, varicella-zoster virus and others. Consider these other infections and perform testing as appropriate.
- A suggestive history may include:
  - Contact with a person or persons with similar appearing rash or who have received a confirmed or probable diagnosis of MPOX.
  - Male who regularly has intimate in-person contact with other men.
- Note: genital lesions and rash can mimic other more common infections such as herpes, syphilis, varicella zoster. Consider these other infections and perform testing as appropriate.

### **Testing:**

- **If clinical evaluation reveals MPOX is high on the differential, consult with the Humboldt County Public Health Communicable Disease Program (707) 268-2182 for testing approval.**
- **Testing can only be performed on swabs of lesions and 2 swabs are required for testing.**
- **Once testing is approved, please call the Humboldt County Public Health Lab at (707) 268-2179 for additional specimen collection and handling guidance.**

### **Treatment:**

- No approved treatment specific for MPOX.
- TPOXX (tecovirimat) may be helpful to reduce symptoms in severe or complicated cases but did not improve outcomes in mild to moderate cases in studies.
- Smallpox vaccine is effective for post-exposure prophylaxis. These treatments are available after case-by-case evaluation. Call the Communicable Disease Program at (707) 268-2182.

### **Infection Control Precautions for Suspected MPOX:**

- Patients with suspected MPOX should be placed in a single person exam room with door closed or an airborne infection isolation.
- Patient should remain masked with a respirator or surgical mask as tolerated.



- The healthcare provider evaluating the patient should wear the following PPE:
  - Gloves
  - Gown
  - Eye protection (goggles or face shield)
  - N95 or equivalent
- PPE should be donned before entering the room and worn during all patient contact. PPE should be removed (gown, eye protection and gloves) and hand hygiene performed prior to leaving room. N95 should be discarded and replaced with a clean mask for source control after leaving room.
- Any EPA-registered hospital grade disinfectant should be used for cleaning and disinfecting environmental surfaces.

**Please contact Humboldt County Public Health Communicable Disease Program as soon as possible at (707) 268-2182 if you suspect a patient may have MPOX.** Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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Resources:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Health-Advisory-Monkeypox-Virus-5-27-22.aspx>

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Health-Advisory-Monkeypox-Virus.aspx>

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/NR22-090.aspx>

[Webinar May 24, 2022 - What Clinicians Need to Know about Monkeypox in the United States and Other Countries \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/index.html)

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