

# Faktencheck Mpox

[Mpox fact check]

Information on symptoms, prevention, and what to do in suspected or confirmed cases

In May 2022, cases of mpox (formerly monkeypox) were identified in Austria for the first time. The outbreak is related to a global outbreak event classified by WHO as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

If you feel any symptoms, in particular after high-risk contacts, please contact your physician or call the health hotline 1450!

Mpox is a notifiable disease.

## Why is monkeypox now called mpox?

As of 28 November 2022, WHO recommends renaming the English name “monkeypox” to “mpox” to counteract racism and stigmatisation. The BMSGPK agrees with the recommendation and henceforth refers to the disease as mpox. In a transitional phase, the name mpox (monkeypox) is used.

[Link to WHO communication](#)

## What is mpox?

Mpox is an infectious disease caused by the mpox virus (MPXV).

## How is mpox communicated?

- Primarily through close, direct contact with rashes, blisters, or pustules of infected persons, e.g.:
  - kissing
  - hugging
  - cuddling
  - having sex
- Contact with objects used by infected people, e.g.:
  - towels
  - bedding
  - clothes
  - tableware
  - sex toys
- Droplet infection, e.g.:
  - extended conversations without sufficient distance

In case of close contact (including sexual contact) with sick people, an infection is very likely. The fluid inside the blisters is highly contagious.

## What symptoms cause mpox?

Symptoms appear 5 to 21 days after contact with an infected person, but have also been observed after a shorter incubation period of 2 to 4 days in the 2022 outbreak.

- Initially, general symptoms of illness may occur:
  - Fever, shivering (chills), exhaustion
  - Pain: headache, back pain, muscle aches
  - Swollen lymphatic glands
- Changes to the skin are characteristic of the disease:
  - Rashes: spots, blisters, pustules
  - May spread to the entire body, also the mucosa, and cause severe pain
  - Often in the genital or anal area in the current outbreak
  - Later, they turn into scabs that will fall off eventually
  - Links to sample images: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/monkeypox/images-monkeypox-lesions>

Until all scabs have fallen off and all skin lesions have completely healed you can pass the infection on to other people (usually for 2–4 weeks).

## How dangerous is mpox?

- Usually, the symptoms will disappear on their own within a few weeks. Most cases in the 2022 outbreak have been mild to moderate.
- In exceptional cases, the course of the disease may be severe or even fatal:
  - Additional skin infections
  - Myocardial inflammation
  - Brain inflammation
  - Pneumonia
  - Inflammation of the eyes with permanent eye damage
- The following groups of people are at increased risk for experiencing a severe case of mpox:
  - Newborns and children (<7 years)
  - Pregnant women
  - Immunocompromised persons

## How can I prevent Mpox?

- Pay strict attention to personal hygiene
- Avoid close contact with infected people
- Avoid touching objects used by infected people
- Avoid multiple and frequent sexual contacts, including with anonymous partners

Using condoms does not provide sufficient protection. This is because the virus may also be passed on through close (skin) contact (also during sexual activities)!

## What do I do if I suspect a case of mpox?

Checklist: Is your answer to one or more of the following questions yes?

- Do I have any symptoms?
- Have I had close contact with a person who has been found to have mpox?
- Have I had many close contacts during the past 21 days?
  - Also sexual contacts?
  - Mainly with strangers?
- Was I in a place where mpox occur?

If yes:

- Strictly avoid any further contacts and practice proper hygiene
- Contact your physician or call the health hotline 1450
- Go and see your physician for a medical check
  - Be sure to make an appointment by telephone in advance!

### **I had contact with a person infected with mpox. What should I do?**

- Strictly avoid close contact with anyone
  - In particular with risk groups
- Pay strict attention to personal hygiene
- Contact the health hotline 1450
  - You should be able to provide information regarding your symptoms, any smallpox vaccinations you might have had earlier, and the most recent contact with the infected person
- Contact persons can still get vaccinated after having had contact. Vaccination should take place as quickly as possible within 4 days of contact and no later than 14 days after it.
  - For more details, contact your local public health authority
- Contact your physician if you notice any symptoms

### **What do I do if I am found to have mpox?**

- Official quarantine or, in individual cases, restrictions on movement instead, until all skin lesions have healed:
  - A medical examination is required to confirm that all skin lesions have completely healed

- Strictly avoid any kind of physical contact with other people
- If several persons are living in the same household, make sure you stay in your own room, ideally use your own toilet and bathroom
- Do not share any household items, towels or bedding with other people
- Notification of contact persons to the public health authorities:
  - (Close) contacts during the past 21 days
  - Contact persons may get vaccinated after contact
- Medical care:
  - If your condition gets worse, call the health hotline 1450 or contact your physician

## What should I do once the official quarantine has ended?

- Clean and disinfect all rooms you have used
  - Detailed instructions are provided in the “Recommendations for patients and household members for final cleaning and disinfection after a confirmed infection with the mpox (monkeypox) virus (MPXV)” (in German)
- Use condoms during sexual intercourse for another 12 weeks

## How do I get vaccinated against Mpox?

There is currently a limited quantity of vaccines against mpox available in Austria. The following persons are eligible for vaccination:

- Preventive vaccination is available for certain healthcare workers at high risk of infection, as well as for high-risk persons, which are persons who frequently change sexual partners, especially men with same-sex partners.
- In case of contact with a person infected with mpox, the vaccine is also available post-exposure, i.e. after contact: contact persons should ideally be vaccinated within 4 days, at most 14 days after contact (post-exposure vaccination).

## Where can I get vaccinated?

- The public health authorities will arrange for you to be vaccinated

- If you are a contact person or a person at high risk, please contact your competent local public health authority

## Where can I get tested?

- Suspected cases of mpox are to be examined by a physician.
  - Making an appointment by telephone is required [see also: what do I do if I suspect a case of mpox?]

## Where can I find out more about mpox?

- Austria
  - [mpox \(monkeypox\) \(sozialministerium.at\)](https://www.sozialministerium.at) (in German)
  - [mpox \(monkeypox\) – AGES](#)
  - [Knowledge instead of prejudice – monkeypox – Aids Hilfe Wien](#) (in German)
- Europe
  - [mpox \(monkeypox\) \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)
  - [Joint ECDC-WHO Regional Office for Europe Mpox Surveillance Bulletin \(europa.eu\)](#)
  - [RKI – Infectious diseases A-Z – mpox/monkeypox](#) (in German)
  - [UK-Mpox \(monkeypox\): background information](#)
- Worldwide
  - [Mpox \(monkeypox\) outbreak 2022 - Global \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int)
  - [Mpox | Poxvirus | CDC](#)
- Contact a physician
  - 1450
  - [“Physician search” \(aerztekammer.at\)](https://www.aerztekammer.at) (in German)