



Rotterdam, August 21, 2024

We are currently receiving many inquiries about the Monkeypox virus. To assist you, we have prepared a Q&A with the most important information.

Current Developments and Resurgence of Mpox (Monkeypox) Outbreaks

Recently, the Mpox (Monkeypox) virus has resurfaced in the news due to a series of outbreaks, particularly in African countries. In 2022, the disease was already detected in individuals in Europe who had no direct link to affected regions in Africa. The disease spread across Europe, North America, and other areas where it is not typically found. After a peak in the summer of 2022, the number of reported cases significantly declined in the fall of 2022. In 2022, the virus belonged to Group II. However, with the recent resurgence, vigilance remains necessary. In this newsletter, we provide you with the latest developments.

Stay informed, and we will ensure that you remain well-informed about this resurgence of Mpox.

Q. What is the Mpox virus?

A. The Monkeypox virus is an infection caused by the Mpox virus, of which there are two main groups: Group I and Group II. It primarily occurs in West and Central Africa, with recent outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and surrounding countries. This concerns a new variant compared to the small outbreaks observed worldwide (including in Europe and the Netherlands) in 2022. Since the end of 2023, there have been small outbreaks of the virus in various African countries.

Q. How does someone get infected with the Mpox virus?

In Africa, Mpox is primarily transmitted by rodents, but it is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can be transmitted from animals to humans, and subsequently between humans. Human-to-human transmission occurs through bodily fluids (saliva, mucus, semen and blood), leading to infection through close skin-to-skin contact. The Mpox virus can be transmitted through any intimate contact with an infected person, though not necessarily through sexual contact. In rare cases, the virus can be transmitted via contaminated materials (such as bed sheets, clothing or toilet seats). The virus can enter through mucous membranes and small cuts or tears in the skin. It may also be spread through droplets from blisters or the mouth and throat, potentially being transmitted through coughing, although this risk is currently considered low. A person can be contagious before symptoms are visible. Some people experience flu-like symptoms or a rash before the appearance of pox (bumps or blisters). Pox can also appear in less visible areas, such as the mouth (sores).

Q. What are the symptoms of Mpox?

A. The symptoms of Mpox resemble those of smallpox, but Mpox generally presents in a much milder form. The main symptom is a skin rash that may appear as red spots, bumps, or blisters. These pox can be painful. After the pox dry up, scabs remain, which fall off the skin after 2-3 weeks. Pox may leave scars on the skin.

More general symptoms of Mpox include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Fatigue

In some individuals, Mpox begins with general symptoms followed by pox, while in others, it may occur in reverse. During the 2022 outbreak, some patients experienced proctitis, a painful inflammation of the lining of the rectum (the final part of the intestine). In some cases, proctitis is the only complaint.

Q. What precautions can I take to prevent infection?

A. You can reduce the risk of contracting Mpox by having fewer or no high-risk contacts. The fewer sexual and cuddling contacts you have, the lower the risk of infection. Avoiding handshakes, kissing, or using others' eating/drinking utensils also reduces the risk of infection.

Recognizing Mpox-related symptoms early can help prevent infection. If you suspect that you or your partner is infected, it is important to avoid intimate contact or sex. Using a condom does not offer sufficient protection. General hygiene rules also apply (covering your nose and mouth when coughing, washing hands, cleaning surfaces, etc.).

Q. Can I get vaccinated against Mpox?

A. Currently, there is no vaccine available in the Netherlands for travellers.

However, in the Netherlands, the GGD offers vaccination to individuals at higher risk of Mpox, such as sex workers or people with HIV. For additional information on vaccination, see: <https://www.rivm.nl/mpox-apenpokken/vaccinatie> (<https://www.rivm.nl/mpox-apenpokken/vaccinatie>)

Q. What should I do if I have symptoms?

A. If you are in (or have recently been in) a country where Mpox is present and you develop symptoms, such as blisters, stay in isolation and contact your general practitioner or the GGD.

Avoid all contact with others and, if possible, avoid contact with pets, as they may also transmit the virus. Maintain good (hand) hygiene, and also be mindful of clothing or bedding that the virus may have contaminated.

Q. If I have Mpox, can/should I be treated?

A. Unfortunately, there is no medication available to treat Mpox. The disease usually resolves on its own within a few weeks without serious consequences. If you experience significant symptoms, supportive therapy may be provided to relieve those symptoms (e.g., itching or fever).

Call a doctor immediately if:

- You have difficulty breathing or breathe very quickly, even while sitting quietly.
- You develop a fever (38 degrees Celsius or higher).
- You become drowsy.

Q. Can I still travel?

A. Yes, there are no travel restrictions related to the Mpox outbreaks, not even to countries where Mpox is more prevalent. However, it is advisable to observe hygiene rules carefully and, if you experience symptoms during or after your stay, contact your (general) doctor. **If you are infected, you obviously cannot travel.**



For more detailed information about Mpox, see <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/monkeypox>(<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/monkeypox>)

The email address where we can be reached for additional questions is world@travelclinic.com. During business hours, we are also available by phone at 010-8201120. Additionally, you can fill out a contact form on our website.

