

Mpox

This information sheet contains information relevant for clade II mpox.

Mpox is an illness caused by a virus that does not spread easily. It is commonly passed on through contact with the blisters or lesions of someone who has mpox. There are 2 types of mpox, known as clades I and II. Clade II is the most common type seen worldwide and all mpox infections reported to-date in Aotearoa New Zealand have been clade II. Mpox cases are increasing in some parts of the world and local outbreaks of clade II mpox in Aotearoa New Zealand continue to occur.



Signs and symptoms – what you can see and feel

Mpox symptoms can start with a flu-like illness (including fever, swollen glands, muscle aches, chills or tiredness).

Most people with mpox develop a rash or other skin changes, known as 'lesions'. Lesions are spots, bumps, blisters or sores that can affect any part of the body including face and mouth, arms and legs, genitals and bottom (both inside and outside).

Some people with mpox will not develop visible lesions but may have other symptoms. These could include inflammation inside the bottom, known as proctitis. Proctitis symptoms include pain, bleeding or discharge from the bottom and a constant feeling that you need to have a bowel movement (poo). Mpox can also cause pain when urinating (peeing) and swelling of the foreskin.

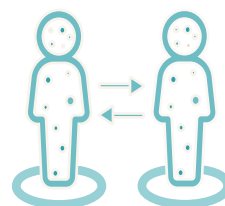


How does mpox spread

Mpox does not spread easily. The ways mpox can spread includes:

- direct contact with mpox lesions. It is most commonly spread through sexual or intimate contact
- direct contact with bedding, clothing, towels and some other objects (including sex toys) used by someone with mpox.

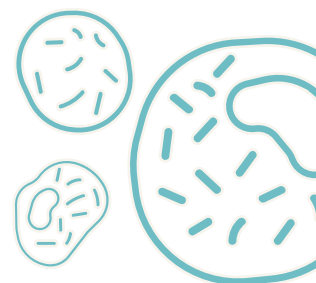
People with mpox are infectious and can pass on the virus from when they first develop symptoms, up until their lesions crust, dry and fall off. This will normally take about 2 to 4 weeks.



People at highest risk of getting mpox

People at highest risk of getting mpox are those who have close physical, intimate or sexual contact with a person with mpox. In Aotearoa, mpox has mostly affected:

- gay, bisexual, takatāpui and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM)
- people who have sex with GBMSM.





Immunisation

The best way to protect against mpox is for eligible people to get immunised. By getting immunised, the vaccine will help to prevent you from getting mpox and it will also reduce complications such as pain and infection in those who develop the illness.

To find out more about the mpox vaccine and if you are eligible, visit info.health.nz/MpoxVaccine, or call the Vaccination Helpline free on 0800 28 29 26 (8:30am–5:00pm Monday to Friday).



Seeking health advice

If you are at risk of mpox and you develop symptoms, please seek medical advice. You can contact your nearest sexual health clinic (visit: nzshs.org/nz-sexual-health-clinics), GP, hauora or healthcare provider, or call Healthline free on 0800 611 116, anytime 24/7 for free health advice and information. Your information is protected under the Health Information Privacy Code.

If you need to be tested, mpox is diagnosed by swabbing skin lesions or other areas where symptoms occur.



People at highest risk of serious illness

People who have a weakened immune system, are pregnant, and infants and young children are at higher risk of serious illness from mpox, although mpox is rare in these groups.

If you (or someone you care for) are in one of these groups and you think you have been exposed to mpox, seek advice from your healthcare provider as soon as possible or contact your local public health service (visit: tewhatuora.govt.nz/contact-public-health-services).



What happens if I get mpox?

If you test positive for mpox, public health staff will be in contact to support you and provide advice on your symptoms and the precautionary measures you need to take to prevent spreading mpox to other people.

You will not be asked to isolate, but you will be asked to cover lesions, not have sexual and intimate contact and to limit contact with people at higher risk of serious illness from mpox.

For some people with mpox, the skin lesions can become itchy or painful. Your healthcare provider can prescribe pain relief if you need it.

Occasionally people with mpox can become very sick. If your symptoms are getting worse, contact your healthcare provider for advice.

If you need to attend a healthcare setting, advise them you have mpox. Cover any lesions and wear a mask during your visit.

If you are feeling seriously unwell and require the support of emergency services, call an ambulance on 111 and let them know you have mpox.





What do close contacts need to do?

If you are a close contact of someone with mpox you should contact your local public health service for support and advice: [tewhatauora.govt.nz/contact-public-health-services](https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/contact-public-health-services).

Close contacts who have been exposed to mpox are also eligible for vaccination (referred to as post-exposure vaccination). If given within 14 days after contact with someone with mpox, it will decrease the risk of developing mpox and limit the severity of symptoms.

You will not be asked to stay home (quarantine), but you should monitor for symptoms for 21 days from when you last had contact with someone with mpox.

If you develop any symptoms, contact your healthcare provider for further advice.



Protecting yourself and others

To reduce the risk of getting or passing on mpox:

- make sure you feel healthy and have no mpox symptoms before having close physical or sexual skin-to-skin contact with others
- do not have close physical (including sexual) contact with someone who has mpox or mpox symptoms
- do not have direct contact with the clothing, bedding or towels of someone with mpox.



For more information visit:

- Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora
info.health.nz/mpox and info.health.nz/MpoxVaccine
- Healthify | He Puna Waiora: healthify.nz/mpox
- The Burnett Foundation website: www.burnettfoundation.org.nz
- Call Healthline on 0800 611 116, anytime 24/7 for free health advice and information about what to do next. You can choose to speak with a Māori clinician if you are calling between 8am and 8pm. Interpreter services and NZ Relay support are also available.
<https://info.health.nz/services-support/healthline>
- For people living or visiting rurally, you can contact a doctor after hours at Ka Ora Telecare 0800 2 KA ORA (0800 252 672) or kaora.co.nz
- Free NZ Relay Services are available at nzrelay.co.nz if you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind or have speech communication difficulties.
- A dedicated helpline for Disability health support is available Monday to Friday, between 8.00am and 5.00pm. Call free on 0800 11 12 13 or text 8988 for help and information or visit healthpoint.co.nz/disability-helpline