

Information about hMPXV for School Communities

You may have heard about hMPXV (monkeypox) and have concerns for how it may impact your school community as we start the 2022-2023 school year. While we do not have cases among children locally, there have been a small number of cases in children across the country. Parents may be concerned, as we all now have a heightened attention and emotional reaction to infectious diseases.

With our current knowledge of how hMPXV is spread, we believe schools will be low-risk settings for transmission. Multnomah County Public Health would like to share our current understanding and guidance for hMPXV as it relates to children and schools.

What is hMPXV?

hMPXV (the human version of monkeypox) is a rash illness caused by a virus related to, but different from, smallpox. hMPXV 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 hMPXV was confirmed in Oregon on June 16, 2022. There have been 89 known cases in Oregon as of August 8, 2022. Almost all of the cases in Oregon have been men above the age of 20, most in their 30s.

Children and hMPXV

There have been no cases of hMPXV in children in Oregon as of August 8, 2022, but there have been a few in other states.

We know that children under 8, children with eczema and other skin conditions, and children with immunocompromising conditions may be at increased risk of severe disease when they contract monkeypox.

How is hMPXV spread?

Anyone can get hMPXV through very close contact with someone who is infected. It is not limited to one community or another. However, this virus is not spread as easily as COVID, measles, or chickenpox. hMPXV is spread primarily through close skin-to-skin contact with someone's sores. Close contact with towels, clothing, or other objects used by someone with the virus can also spread the virus.

Unlike COVID-19, people with hMPXV can only spread the virus while they have symptoms or sores that have not completely healed.



Preventing getting the disease

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

- 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 children
- Wash your hands frequently, especially after using the restroom and before eating

While we know hMPXV 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 hMPXV, people are not getting infected by touching surfaces in schools, buses, public buildings, etc. They are not getting infected by casual encounters with friends and community members.

If a household member has hMPXV, follow CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting in the home to protect other household members.

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. Other common symptoms include fever, swollen lymph nodes, fatigue, and headache, although these symptoms are not always present.

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

Public health efforts

Anyone diagnosed with hMPXV will be contacted by and receive information from their local health department about next steps and how to keep their household and community safe. This includes the health department contacting anyone who has been identified as a close contact.

If a child is identified as a close contact or tests positive, our team will help them access care and consider whether a vaccine or treatment to reduce chance of severe disease or infecting others is needed.

Anyone who has been identified as a close contact and does not have symptoms will not be asked to quarantine. We will provide information on what to watch for and what to do if symptoms develop.

Multnomah County Public Health will be regularly communicating with local school leadership to share current information as well as receive updates about potential hMPXV situations in schools. If a school does experience an exposure, we will work closely together to identify risks and provide guidance. Visit multco.us/hmpxv for more information.