

15 simple mpox facts you should know

Here's a concise list of facts about mpox disease. Find out why mpox is not a new disease, who is most at risk of infection, and what treatment involves.

Mpox: Not a new disease

- 1) Mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, is a disease caused by the monkeypox virus – a virus in the same family as smallpox. Monkeypox was discovered in 1958 in Denmark when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research – so the name 'monkeypox'.
- 2) Mpox is not a new disease, so it is well understood. The first human case of monkeypox was recorded in 1970. It's affected people in central and west Africa for decades. The disease has been controlled through simple measures like isolating infected people.
 - There is currently a rise in cases of mpox, outside of the countries where the disease is usually found. [Find out more.](#)
- 3) In November 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that [the new preferred term for monkeypox](#) was 'mpox'. This is because the use of racist and stigmatising language increased after an outbreak of monkeypox earlier in 2022.

A rare infection with low transmissibility

- 4) Mpox is generally a rare viral infection in humans, so the threat or risk of infection for the general population is considered low. That said, children and immunocompromised adults, including those with HIV, may experience more severe forms of the disease.
- 5) There's a very low likelihood of mpox becoming a global pandemic.

Low infection risk

- 6) You can't get mpox just by being in the same room as an infected person.
- 7) Transmission occurs mainly through close contact, such as kissing, cuddling, sexual contact, or sharing contaminated items like linen or clothing. Although less common, it can also spread through respiratory droplets during prolonged face-to-face contact.
- 8) While the 2022 outbreak was more common among men who have sex with men, mpox is not exclusive to this group and can affect anyone, regardless of sexual orientation.
- 9) Because mpox is spread by close physical contact, having multiple sexual partners is one risk factor, alongside close contact with infected individuals or materials.

High recovery rates

- 10) Most people with mpox recover within two to four weeks without hospital treatment.
- 11) There are two known strains of mpox, clade 1 and clade 2. The new clade 1b, which is currently spreading, causes more severe illness and death than the other strains.
- 12) Mpox is rarely fatal. The WHO says that according to available data, between 0.1% and 10% of people with mpox have died.

- 13) Treatment is supportive, as with most viral infections. Most cases don't require specific treatment, but South Africa's Health Department will provide antivirals for severe cases in hospitals.
- 14) The best way to prevent spreading mpox is for infected individuals to isolate. They are contagious from the time they develop a rash or lesions until all scabs fall off.
- 15) There are vaccines for mpox but it's only recommended for people at high risk who are living in areas with ongoing outbreaks.

Find out more

Read our related articles for more information:

- Key info on mpox: how it spreads, symptoms, prevention and treatment
- Understand why mpox has been declared a global public health emergency

Get the facts from reliable sources

For the most accurate and up-to-date information, consult the [National Institute for Communicable Diseases \(NICD\)](#) in South Africa and the [World Health Organization](#).