

Mpox

An Update on the New Public Health Emergency

By **Christine Bingman**, DNP, RN¹
& **Denise Cutting**, MSN, MSH, RN*¹



Keywords: mpox, virus, rash, clade, pustules

*Corresponding author

¹Patient Safety Authority

Disclosure: The authors declare that they have no relevant or material financial interests.

Submitted

September 10, 2024

Accepted

September 11, 2024

Published

October 30, 2024

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This article was previously distributed in an October 2, 2024, newsletter of the Patient Safety Authority, available at <https://conta.cc/3ZKn7UV>.

Bingman C, Cutting D. Mpox: An Update on the New Public Health Emergency. *Patient Safety*. 2024;6(1):124257. doi:10.33940/001c.124257

Mpox, previously known as monkeypox virus, is an infectious disease spread through close contact and respiratory droplets.¹ Exposure to the virus can occur during travel to an area with sustained human-to-human transmission; contact with a confirmed, probable, or suspected case; contact with a dead or live wild animal or exotic pet that is a central African endemic species; or use of a product derived from such animals (e.g., game meat, creams, lotions, powders, etc.).² Mpox symptoms typically start within 21 days of exposure with influenza-like symptoms, followed by a vesicular or pustular rash one to four days later. The rash is generally located on the palms of hands, soles of feet, genitalia, and anus.³

The disease is drawing more attention in the health community due to the ease of transmission and higher fatality rate as compared to previous years.² The World Health Organization has declared mpox a global public health emergency for the second time in two years.⁴ The two circulating clades are responsible for confirmed cases identified in 116 countries worldwide, including the United States.⁴ As of August 2024, subclade Ib is responsible for the upsurge of severe cases of mpox in several African countries, Europe, and Asia.

Providers are urged to include mpox in their list of differential diagnoses when vesicles or pustules are present with influenza-like illness. Patients should be assessed for contact with others who have a rash and recent travel to areas where mpox cases have been identified.²

Infection can be confirmed by various methods, including polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing, next-generation sequencing (NGS), or mpox culturing from clinical specimens.⁵ Consult public health authorities for access to mpox treatment recommendations. Oral treatment with tecovirimat can be considered for patients who meet eligibility criteria.⁵

People can protect themselves by

- Getting vaccinated if appropriate. To determine eligibility and locate vaccines see <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/vaccines/vaccine-recommendations.html>
- Avoiding close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like mpox
- Avoiding contact with objects and materials that a person with mpox has used
- Washing hands often⁶

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About the Authors

Christine Bingman is a registered nurse and an infection preventionist for the Patient Safety Authority.

Denise Cutting (dcutting@pa.gov) is a registered nurse and an infection preventionist for the Patient Safety Authority.

