

Mpox

The World Health Organization announced on August 14 that the outbreak of monkeypox in certain regions of Africa has once again been classified as constituting a "Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)."

Disease Introduction

Mpox (also known as monkeypox) is a zoonosis caused by monkeypox virus. First discovered in 1958 in monkeys kept for research, hence the virus was named 'monkeypox virus'. On 28 November 2022, WHO recommended "mpox" as a synonym of the disease of "monkeypox" in English which would become a preferred term in English after a transition period of one year.

Epidemiology

Africa CDC officially declared the ongoing Mpox outbreak a "Public Health Emergency of Continental Security" on August 13. In recent weeks, there has been a sustained increase in the number of Mpox cases and outbreaks reported in countries in the WHO African Region. At least 13 African countries reported Mpox outbreaks and have confirmed 2 863 cases and 517 deaths in 2024. In light of the emergence of a new sexually transmissible Mpox strain and its rapid spread in eastern DRC and several neighbouring countries of the DRC, and the potential for further international spread within and outside Africa, the WHO today announced that the upsurge of Mpox to be a PHEIC.

As of August 14, a total of 67 Mpox cases (54 local and 13 imported) have been recorded in Hong Kong since 2022, among which 13 of them are recorded this year. All of the 67 cases were males. Epidemiological investigation showed that most cases involved men who have sex with men (MSM)/ bisexual with history of high-risk sexual behaviours, including having sex with strangers or unsafe sex.

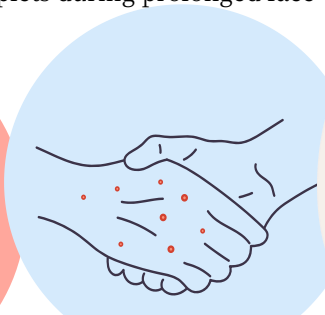
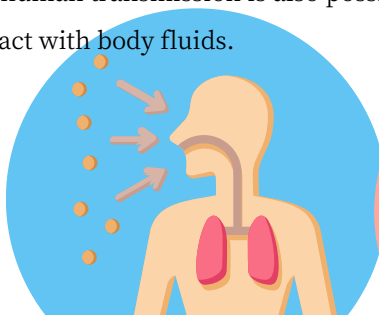
Mode of Transmission



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Infection could occur when a person comes into contact with the virus from infected animals, humans or contaminated materials. Humans could get infected by various wild animals, such as some species of primates, rodents and squirrels, etc., through bite or scratch, or direct contact with their body fluids.

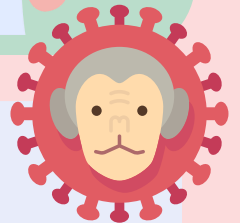
Human-to-human transmission is also possible through respiratory droplets during prolonged face-to-face contact or direct contact with body fluids.



Clinical Features

The symptoms are similar to those of smallpox, but in milder forms. The first few days after infection with mpox are characterised by fever, intense headache, myalgia and lymphadenopathy. Severe swollen lymph nodes before the appearance of rash could be a distinctive feature of mpox. Lesions in mouth and body appear about 1 to 3 days after onset of fever.

The lesions progress from maculopapules to vesicles, pustules and followed by crusts within a period of 10 days to two weeks and the lesions typically progress simultaneously at all parts of the body. The incubation period is usually from 6 to 13 days, with a range from 5 to 21 days.



Prevention

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the DH commenced the Mpox Vaccination Programme in October 2022, using a third-generation vaccine for contacts of confirmed cases as well as individuals at high risk of exposure on a voluntary basis.

- Avoid close, skin-to-skin contact with sick people or people with a rash that looks like mpox;
- Avoid contact with objects and materials that a person with mpox has used, such as eating utensils or cups, bedding, towels, or clothing;
- Avoid contact with sick or dead animals;
- Implement appropriate infection control precautions when taking care of ill people or handling animals, such as wearing protective clothing and equipment including gloves and surgical masks;
- Maintain hand hygiene. Clean hands with liquid soap and water when they are visibly soiled or likely contaminated with blood and body fluid. When hands are not visibly soiled, they could be cleaned with 70-80% alcohol-based handrub;
- Thoroughly cook all animal products before eating;
- Seek medical advice promptly for any suspicious symptoms

Mpox
Vaccination Programme

