



St. Lawrence County Public Health Department

Jolene Munger, MPH, MA ■ Public Health Director
80 State Highway 310, Suite 2 ■ Canton, New York 13617-1476
Phone: (315) 386-2325 ■ Fax: (315) 386-2203

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Contact: Angela Firicano

315-386-2325

Monkeypox: overview, symptoms, and precautions

Canton NY—Since May 2022, New York State officials have been closely tracking an emerging outbreak of monkeypox cases. Monkeypox is a viral infection in the same family as smallpox. It does not usually cause serious illness. However, monkeypox can result in painful lesions or sores and sometimes result in hospitalization or death. While the strain currently circulating in the US is rarely fatal, symptoms can be extremely painful, and rashes from monkeypox can result in permanent scarring.

On July 23rd, 2022 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the monkeypox outbreak a public health emergency. On July 28th 2022, the New York State Commissioner of Health Dr. Mary T. Bassett declared monkeypox an Imminent Threat to Public Health in New York State. With 1,383 confirmed monkeypox cases reported in the State as of July 29th, New York is now experiencing one of the highest rates of transmission in the country. As of July 29th, Governor Hochul declared a State Disaster Emergency in response to the ongoing monkeypox outbreak.

At this time, St. Lawrence County reports 1 confirmed case of monkeypox and there is no identified risk to any County residents.

Overview:

Monkeypox spreads through close physical contact between two people, and anybody can get monkeypox. However, due to social networks and patterns of exposure, cases in the current outbreak have been mainly but not exclusively among self-identified gay, bisexual, and other transgender, gender nonconforming, and non-binary individuals. **We continue to emphasize that monkeypox can affect anyone – regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.**

Symptoms:

Symptoms of monkeypox include rashes, bumps, or blisters (which can look similar to syphilis, herpes, or even common skin ailments such as poison ivy), along with fever and headaches, muscle aches, and swollen lymph nodes. In the current outbreak, these rashes or bumps often occur in the genital or peri-anal area, and may take place without fever or other flu-like symptoms. Symptoms typically start 1-2 weeks after exposure to the virus.

How monkeypox is spread:

- Direct contact with monkeypox sore or rashes through intimate or skin-to-skin contact.
- Contact with objects or fabrics (e.g., clothing, bedding, towels) that have been used by someone with monkeypox.
- Respiratory droplets or oral fluids from someone with monkeypox.

While monkeypox may be mistaken for common Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and can be spread through close physical contact, which includes sexual contact, monkeypox is **not** considered an STI.

Precautions:

- Ask sexual partners whether they have a rash or other symptoms consistent with monkeypox.
- Avoid skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a rash or other monkeypox related symptoms.
- Contact a healthcare provider following exposure or symptoms.

Monkeypox Vaccine:

The federal government has made a small number of monkeypox vaccine available to those at highest risk, as well as those with confirmed or likely recent exposure.

In this phase of vaccine distribution, New York State Department of Health has allocated doses specific to the city and the rest of the State's allocation will be distributed to counties based on the number of monkeypox cases. SLCPH will continue to update county residents when the vaccine becomes available.

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