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Chicago Department of Public Health Continues to Investigate Monkeypox Infections and Asks the Public to Take Precautions this Summer

CHICAGO - The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) continues to investigate reports of monkeypox cases in Chicago residents and is asking people to take proper precautions when in spaces or situations where monkeypox could be spread through close or intimate contact. As of June 12, 2022, Chicago has identified seven confirmed cases of monkeypox, and CDPH continues to work closely with the Illinois Department of Public Health and other local public health departments to identify other potential cases.

Some of the current cases involve individuals who recently traveled to Europe. One Chicago resident reported attending the International Mr. Leather (IML) conference in Chicago from May 26-30. Additionally, residents from another state who were diagnosed with monkeypox also reported attending the IML conference.

CDPH sent communication to public health departments around the country about its ongoing investigation to request notification of any additional cases who visited Chicago from May 26-30. Learning of additional monkeypox infections will assist local health officials in their ongoing investigation and contact tracing.

Globally, 33 countries have reported more than 1,450 confirmed monkeypox cases. In the United States, 49 confirmed cases have been reported in 16 states and the District of Columbia. Most of the infected individuals have reported only mild symptoms, and none have died. For a map and national case count visit the CDC site [here](#).

Early data suggest that gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) make up a high number of cases. It is important to note that the risk of monkeypox is not limited to MSM and not all Chicago cases have been among men. Anyone who has close contact with someone who is infectious is at risk. Individuals can become infected with the monkeypox virus when they come in contact with lesions, bodily fluids, or respiratory secretions of anyone infected with the virus, as well as with objects that may have been in contact with lesion crusts or bodily fluids (e.g., contaminated linens, bandages, dishes).

“While the risk in Chicago remains low, CDPH wants the public to be able to make informed choices about gathering in spaces or participating in events where monkeypox could be spread through close or intimate contact,” said Allison Arwady, M.D., CDPH Commissioner.

CDPH has been engaging with organizers of summer events to share information and encourage messaging about safety. This had included a template letter for event organizers to print on their own letterhead that includes recommendations for staying healthy while celebrating. In addition, CDPH has printed palm cards for organizers to hand out at events with a link to a CDC page that provides health tips for gay and bisexual men and a scannable smartphone code to access more health information.

Individuals attending festivals or other summer events should consider how much close, personal, skin-to-skin contact is likely to occur at the events they plan to attend. If someone feels sick or has rashes or sores, CDPH recommends not attending a gathering, and visiting a healthcare provider as soon as possible. See [here](#) for guidance on gatherings from the CDC.

Monkeypox is a potentially serious viral illness; however, the United States has tools at hand to respond to its emergence. CDPH continues to support clinical partners with testing to identify infected individuals, isolate anyone found to be infected with the virus, trace infected individuals’ close contact with others, and monitor for symptom onset during the incubation period. In collaboration with federal partners, CDPH coordinates post exposure prophylaxis of exposed contacts as well as treatment with antiviral medication for those with more severe illness.

Suspected cases may present with flu-like symptoms early on and progress to lesions that may begin on one part of the body and spread to other areas. Illness could be clinically confused with sexually transmitted infections like syphilis or herpes, or with the varicella zoster virus. Healthcare providers should be alert for patients who have rash illnesses consistent with monkeypox and to report suspect cases to public health. Individuals with new or unexplained rashes, sores, or other symptoms should avoid close contact with anyone until evaluated by a healthcare provider.

For more about the monkeypox virus, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/> and <https://chi.gov/monkeypox>.

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