



July 27, 2022

Contact:

media.coronavirus@cityofchicago.org

CDPH MPV Update: Cases Surpass 300, Testing Encouraged as City Continues to Prioritize Those at Highest Risk

Current Chicago case count at 326

CHICAGO – The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) announced today that 326 Chicagoans have tested positive for the monkeypox virus (MPV) as the department and City continue outreach efforts in response to the outbreak. CDPH encourages Chicagoans to educate themselves about MPV – the MPV page of the [CDPH website](#) is updated daily with new information and resources – and to take precautions to help stem the spread of the virus.

The most common symptoms of MPV are a rash or sores that look like pimples or blisters that can appear anywhere on the body. Some people also have flu-like symptoms including fever, chills, fatigue and swollen lymph nodes. MPV is primarily spread from person to person through direct contact with a rash or sore or through respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact. Currently, it is most often spread during intimate activities, including sex or kissing, though it can spread through bedding or other materials used by a person infected with MPV.

Though anyone can catch MPV, most, but not all, of the cases in Chicago have been diagnosed in males, with a median age of 35 (patients range from 22 to 66 years old). About 4 percent of cases in Chicago have required hospitalization and there have been no known deaths from MPV. Currently, MPV is primarily affecting and spreading among gay, bisexual or other (cis or trans) men who have sex with men, who have intimate or sexual contact with other men in social or sexual venues, or who have multiple or anonymous partners.

“MPV is not a ‘gay disease’,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “There’s nothing inherent in the biology of the virus that limits it to men who have sex with men. The virus spreads through tight-knit social networks; it does not discriminate.”

Dr. Arwady noted that most casual contact and day-to-day activities, like shopping in crowded stores, going to a bar or coffee house, riding crowded CTA trains and buses, or using gym equipment or public restrooms, pose little to no risk for contracting MPV.

“Still, you should assess the risk factors of any activities. For instance, avoid sharing drinks or cigarettes or vape pens, and if you have sex with a new partner, take some time to talk about MPV, look for symptoms on your bodies, and if you have rashes, sores, or are feeling sick, don’t



engage in any skin-to-skin physical contact,” said Dr. Arwady. “And most importantly, if you start to exhibit symptoms, see a health provider and get tested right away. If you test positive, we can vaccinate your recent close contacts to help stop further spread of the virus.”

Testing capacity throughout Chicago has increased now that many commercial labs have begun testing for MPV. There is no screening test available for people without symptoms; the primary test is done by taking a swab of the rash or lesion at a doctor’s office or clinic.

MPV vaccine (JYNNEOS) supply remains very limited, though it is expected to continue to ramp up over the next few months as the U.S. acquires additional doses. Vaccine is only available from the national stockpile and federal partners distribute it to states and cities based on population and MPV case counts. Chicago received an additional 15,000 doses of the vaccine over the weekend, by far the city’s largest allotment to date. However, many more individuals want vaccine than can receive it; for example, approximately 120,000 men who have sex with men live in Cook County.

As more doses have arrived, CDPH continues to first prioritize vaccine for those at highest risk: any individual who has had close physical contact with someone diagnosed with MPV or whose sexual partner was diagnosed with MPV in the last 14 days. This “ring vaccination” strategy paired with rapid case investigation and contact tracing is the best chance to contain the outbreak.

Additionally, limited vaccine is available through some healthcare providers to reach individuals at higher risk of potential exposure to MPV, especially those who may not have contact information for all of their recent intimate contacts. Currently, this includes gay, bisexual or other (cis or trans) men who have sex with men who ALSO have one of three additional risk criteria: intimate or sexual contact with other men in a social or sexual venue; multiple or anonymous partners; or giving or receiving money or other goods/services in exchange for sex. As vaccine supply improves, more individuals will be eligible for vaccine.

The vaccine is *not* currently recommended for the general public, including same gender loving men who do not have one of the additional risk criteria. The full course of vaccine consists of 2 doses given at least 4 weeks apart. It takes about 2 weeks for the first dose to take full effect. In Chicago, given the rapidly growing outbreak and low vaccine availability, we are prioritizing giving first doses of JYNNEOS vaccine to more individuals rather than reserving a supply of second doses. The goal is to protect as many people as possible as quickly as possible. While there will likely be a delay in some people receiving their second doses, the first dose provides the most substantial increase in antibodies that protect against the virus.

Personal prevention measures and assessing one’s own risk factors are important frontline defenses against MPV. To lower the chance of getting MPV at places like clubs and festivals, where the general risk is very low, consider how much close, personal, skin-to-skin contact is



likely to occur at the event you plan to attend. Avoid any rashes or sores you see on others and minimize skin-to-skin contact when possible.

Settings where there is higher likelihood of spreading MPV include enclosed spaces such as backrooms, saunas or sex clubs, where there is minimal or no clothing and where intimate sexual contact occurs. If your partner has MPV, the best way to protect yourself and others is to avoid any kind of intimate contact; do not kiss or touch each other's bodies while you are sick or share food or drinks. Do not share things like towels, bedding, clothing, fetish gear, sex toys, and toothbrushes.

CDPH is strongly encouraging all clinicians and healthcare providers throughout the city to test any patient with possible MPV symptoms.

For additional information, visit the CDPH monkeypox website [Chicago.gov/monkeypox](https://chicago.gov/monkeypox): [Get the Facts: Monkeypox](#)

###