How to Care for Someone with Monkeypox at Home

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Caregivers of people with monkeypox are at higher risk of getting infected. If you are caring for someone with monkeypox at home, this fact sheet provides tips for keeping you and others safe.

Understand How Monkeypox Spreads

Monkeypox spreads from person to person through close contact. Spread can occur from touching skin lesions, bodily fluids, or clothing or linens that have been in contact with an infected person or during prolonged, face-to-face contact. Examples of how monkeypox spreads include:

- Sexual or intimate contact
- Hugging, kissing, and cuddling
- Sharing a bed, towel, or clothes that have not been washed

Assign a Caregiver and Monitor the Person’s Health

People at higher risk for severe illness are those who are pregnant, children, and people with weakened immune systems. It is best if the caregiver is not in one of these groups.

Monitor the person with monkeypox. If symptoms worsen, call the healthcare provider. The provider might prescribe antiviral medicine or recommend other treatment, like medicine for painful or itchy lesions.

Separate from Other People and Pets

People with monkeypox are contagious until all their scabs fall off and a fresh layer of intact skin forms. This can take 2–4 weeks. During this time, the person should:

- **Stay home** and not leave except for medical appointments or emergencies.
- **Stay away from others in the home, including pets.** If possible, stay in a separate bedroom and use a separate bathroom. If staying away from others is not possible, the person should cover lesions with bandages and wear a well-fitting face mask.
- **Do not share personal items** that might be contaminated, such as bed linens, clothing, towels, wash cloths, drinking glasses, or eating utensils.
- **Wash hands often** with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.
- When possible, the person should **change their own bandages and handle contaminated linens while wearing disposable gloves**, followed by immediate handwashing after removing gloves. As a last resort, if help is needed with these activities, the caregiver should avoid extensive contact and wear, at a minimum, disposable medical gloves and a well-fitting mask or respirator. Any clothing that contacts the rash during dressing changes should be immediately laundered. Gloves should be disposed of after use, followed by handwashing.
Monkeypox can spread from people to certain animals through close contact, including petting, cuddling, hugging, kissing, licking, sharing sleeping areas, and sharing food. That is why it is best for the caregiver, not the person with monkeypox, to care for pets.

- People with monkeypox should avoid contact with mammals, including domestic animals and wildlife, to prevent spreading monkeypox.
- It is important to make sure the pet does not come into contact with the person’s rash, body fluids, or contaminated objects, such as bed linens, clothing, towels, or bandages.

Cleaning and Disinfecting the Home

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has detailed information on how to clean and disinfect the home at cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/specific-settings/home-disinfection.html

In general, it is important to:

- Routinely clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and items (such as light switches).
- Disinfect any shared spaces or items immediately after use.
- Wear, at a minimum, disposable medical gloves and a respirator or well-fitting mask if cleaning and disinfection is done by someone other than the person with monkeypox.
- Wash laundry in a standard washing machine with detergent, following label instructions. Do not shake the laundry because this might release pieces of skin or scabs into the air.

- Do not dry dust or sweep because this might spread infectious particles. Wet cleaning methods are preferred, such as disinfectant wipes, sprays, and mopping.
- Vacuuming is acceptable using a vacuum with a high-efficiency air filter. If not available, ensure the person vacuuming wears a well-fitting mask or respirator.

Monitor Your Health

Caregivers should monitor for these monkeypox symptoms: skin rash on any part of your body (even if it is only 1 or 2 spots), fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and back aches, and swollen lymph nodes. If you develop any of these symptoms, call your healthcare provider right away to get tested, and, if needed, treatment. Symptoms may take up to 21 days after exposure to develop.

More Resources

VDH Monkeypox website: vdh.virginia.gov/monkeypox/
CDC “If You Are Sick” website: cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/if-you-are-sick.html