

Monkeypox

What is monkeypox and what causes it?

Monkeypox is a viral disease discovered in laboratory monkeys in 1958. The disease most commonly occurs in central and west Africa. Many animal species and humans can be infected. In 2003, monkeypox infected several people in the United States after they had contact with infected prairie dogs. The monkeypox virus is closely related to the viruses that cause smallpox and cowpox in humans.

What animals get monkeypox?

Old and New World monkeys and apes, a variety of rodents (including rats, mice, squirrels, and prairie dogs) and rabbits are susceptible to infection. The complete range of animal species that can be infected by the monkeypox virus is still not known; other wild and domestic animals may be susceptible.

How can my animal get monkeypox?

Monkeypox is spread by **direct contact** between infected and uninfected animals. This can possibly be through skin abrasions or through the air in aerosols.

How does monkeypox affect my animal?

In non-human primates, monkeypox is usually a rash that lasts for 4 to 6 weeks; these sores or “pocks” can be seen over the entire body but are most common on the face, limbs, palms, soles, and tails. Death is rare but can be seen in infant monkeys. Some monkeys can be infected with the virus but show no signs of illness.

In rabbits and rodents, including prairie dogs, the initial signs include fever, reddened eyes, runny nose, cough, swollen glands, depression, and loss of appetite. Later, a rash with small swellings, containing pus (“pocks”), and patchy hair loss can develop. In some animals, pneumonia or death can occur.

Can I get monkeypox?

Yes. People can get monkeypox by **direct contact** with an infected animal’s blood, body fluids or sores as well as by a bite. Signs of illness start about 12 days after exposure. Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, chills, sore throat, swollen glands (lymph nodes), and fatigue. Usually within 1 to 3 days, a rash with raised bumps develops, on the arms and legs and possibly the face and torso. Later, these sores develop into “pocks”, blister-like lesions containing pus. In the final stages, these sores crust over, form scabs, and eventually fall off. Illness generally lasts 2 to 4 weeks and most people recover fully.

Who should I contact, if I suspect monkeypox?

In Animals – Contact your veterinarian immediately.

In Humans – Contact your physician immediately.

How can I protect my animal from monkeypox?

Vaccination with vaccinia virus (used in smallpox vaccination) can protect non-human primates from monkeypox. For all other animals, the best method of prevention is to avoid exposure to animals or people infected with monkeypox. Do not keep wild animals as pets, particularly prairie dogs and wild mice or rats.

How can I protect myself from monkeypox?

Avoid exposure to animals or people infected with the monkeypox virus. Although the smallpox vaccine has been shown to reduce the risk of monkeypox, it is only recommended for persons involved with monkeypox outbreak investigations or those who have close contact with or care for people or animals infected with the virus. Vaccination can be given up to 14 days after exposure.

For More Information

CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Monkeypox at <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/>

CDC website. Monkeypox at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/monkeypox/>

