

Monkeypox Symptoms and Treatment

Monkeypox is caused by a virus in the same family as smallpox, though it's not as transmissible or fatal. Typically, patients have a fever, muscle aches, and then a rash on their face, mouth, hands, and possibly genitals that can last for several weeks.

The current outbreak is spreading via human-to-human contact, such as touching a lesion, or exchanging saliva or other bodily fluids. People can also become infected by touching objects or surfaces, such as sex toys or sheets, shared with someone with the illness.

The first U.S. monkeypox case of this outbreak was reported May 17, and since then, the number has grown to more than 6,300 probable or confirmed cases representing almost every state, plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Monday declared a state of emergency to coordinate response and bolster the state's vaccination efforts. About half of California's 1,135 monkeypox cases have been concentrated in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Although anyone can get infected, the outbreak appears to have largely affected men who have sex with men. Kwong said he likely contracted monkeypox from a sexual encounter during New York Pride events. Andrew Noymer, an associate professor at the University of California-Irvine who studies infectious diseases said: "*This is **not going to blow up like covid**, but this outbreak is going to have legs,*" he said. "*It may be like syphilis and it'll just sort of be around.*" But most doctors don't know how to recognize it. "*Even though I've worked on and off in several sub-Saharan African countries over the last 25 years, I've actually **never treated a case of monkeypox**,*" Brewer said. "*Before this current outbreak, monkeypox was a very unusual disease.*" A rash limited to the genital or rectal area may be mistaken for a sexually transmitted infection. But even if doctors haven't been trained to recognize monkeypox, Brewer said, their advice to patients could help contain the spread.

Although many cases are mild and resolve on their own, some rapidly become serious.

Tecovirimat, an antiviral medication branded as TPOXX, has received special clearance from the FDA to treat monkeypox in certain circumstances.

After the first day on the drug, Kwong noticed that his rash stopped spreading. Over the next two days, the hundreds of swollen spots flattened into red disks.

Chin-Hong said health workers might not have rubbed lesions hard enough to get live cells for the monkeypox test. "It's very difficult as a clinician to really get a good sample in these kinds of lesions because the patient is often in pain. And you don't like to see people suffer," Chin-Hong said.

Clinicians need to **collect at least two samples from multiple locations on the patient's body**, he said. The key, Brewer said, is to **sample lesions "at different stages of development" and not concentrate only on the early bumps.**

For two weeks, patients take **six antiviral pills a day to rid his body of the virus.**

It takes more **than a month** for hands and feet to heal. Cuticles and skin on the hands peel off and are in the process of regrowing, while fingernails have turned black and started to fall off, he said. **The psychological toll takes longer to overcome.**