

MONKEYPOX VIRUS

QUICK START GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS AND CHILD CARE FACILITIES

This document serves as a summary of monkeypox guidance for schools and childcare facilities. Monkeypox disease is caused by the monkeypox virus. Monkeypox is transmitted to humans through close contact with an infected person, animal, or with material contaminated with the virus. Monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, personal, often skin-to-skin contact including:

- Direct contact with rash, sores, or scabs from a person with monkeypox.
- Contact with objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding, or towels), and surfaces that have been used by a person with monkeypox.¹
- Contact with respiratory secretions

Harris County Public Health (HCPH) recommends several prevention strategies based on the current scientific evidence, CDC guidance², and the American Academy of Pediatrics³ recommendations. These measures aim to reduce disease transmission in your facilities and help ensure staff and students remain on campus.

HCPH has several services available to assist your facility in achieving this goal. Please notify your contact at HCPH, or call the monkeypox hotline, if you are interested in any of the following:

- Education and outreach events for staff, students, and parents
- Evaluation of monkeypox mitigation plans
- On-site health and safety assessments

HCPH can also aid with testing, case investigation, and contact tracing.

Reporting Cases and Outbreaks

In accordance with Texas Health and Safety Code HSC 81.042, TAC 97.2, facility administrators should notify local health officials, staff, and families *immediately* of any report of confirmed or suspected monkeypox while maintaining confidentiality.⁴ If a facility has campuses in more than one county/city, they should notify the local health official for that campus.⁵

Harris County Public Health has set up a hotline to answer questions about monkeypox. For inquiries about about testing, vaccinations, and specific monkeypox guidance, please call 832-927-0707. If exposure has occurred with monkeypox, please take the following precautions: other symptoms that are common with monkeypox include:

- Notify a healthcare provider immediately for consultation or contact the local health department if you do not have a provider.
- Avoid gatherings, especially if they involve close, personal, skin-to-skin contact.

What to do if someone is symptomatic

Symptoms will often include rashes that can look like pimples or blisters. These can appear on the face, inside the mouth, and in other parts of the body such as hands, feet, chest genitals, or anus. Rashes will go through different stages before healing completely, a process that can remain for several weeks. Some individuals who have monkeypox will only experience rashes, however, other symptoms that are common with monkeypox include:

- Immediately separate the individual and contact their parent/guardian to pick them up. Avoid all direct skin-to-skin contact while caring for the individual. Clean and disinfect any surfaces they touched.
- Refer the person to their primary care physician for testing, medical evaluation, and potential treatment. They may also call the Monkeypox Hotline for guidance.
- Notify Local Health Department immediately:
 - **Harris County Public Health**
 - Monkeypox Hotline: **(832) 927-0707**
 - After hours operator: **(713) 755-5050**
 - Monkeypox reporting inbox: **SEU.Reports@phs.hctx.net**
 - HCPH monkeypox webpage: <https://publichealthharriscountytx.gov/monkeypox>
 - **City of Houston**
 - Monkeypox Hotline: **(832) 393-4220**

Protocols for Monkeypox Cases and Close Contacts

Individuals with Monkeypox or Waiting for Test Result

Individuals with monkeypox or those waiting for test results should isolate at home and not return until they have met the criteria to discontinue isolation. Guidelines for isolation and returning to a facility after testing positive for monkeypox infection are as follows:

- Schoolwork should be supported by using virtual learning tools for the duration of a child's isolation period. Isolation can often last 2 – 4 weeks.

- Advice for caregivers:⁶
 - o Seek a vaccination as soon as possible if exposed. A limited supply of vaccine is available for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for individuals who have been directly exposed to monkeypox and/or are at high risk of contracting the monkeypox virus.⁷
 - o Avoid all skin-to-skin contact; wear long sleeves, use disposable gloves if contact is necessary, have the infected person cover their lesions
 - o Avoid scratching skin lesions
 - o Avoid contact with other people and pets. If possible, one person should be the caregiver of a child with monkeypox
 - o Children who are at least 2 years of age should wear a well-fitting mask when interacting with a caregiver, and the caregiver should wear a respirator or well-fitting mask
 - o Use gloves when skin contact with the child may occur and when handling bandages, clothing, bedding, towels, or other objects
 - o Do not share items with others. Wash any items that will be used by others with detergent (or soap) and water thoroughly after each use
 - o Do not share a bed
 - o If using a shared bathroom, do not share towels or washcloths and disinfect all surfaces between use (counters, toilets, handles, bathtubs, etc.)
- Isolation may end when:
 - o Monkeypox has been ruled out after the individual has been evaluated by a healthcare provider.
 - o The individual has fully recovered from monkeypox, meaning all scabs on lesions have fallen off and there is new skin growth underneath.

Close Contacts

A close contact is defined as someone who had direct skin-to-skin contact with a case OR as someone who was within 6 feet of a symptomatic case for 3 or more hours. HCPH will conduct contact tracing to identify those who are close contacts.

Summary of Disease Mitigation Recommendations

Currently, schools and childcare facilities can maintain their normal practices for reducing the spread of communicable diseases. The following table is a summary of current facility recommendations in the event of a suspected or confirm case of monkeypox:

(cont. on next page)

Strategy	Recommendation
Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If an individual has a suspicious rash or multiple rashes, and there is a history of close, personal contact with someone who has monkeypox, they can be tested by their primary care physician or by HCPH if they do not have a provider based on eligibility and availability of tests.
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify HCPH immediately of any confirmed or suspected report of monkeypox. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Contact the monkeypox Hotline: (832) 927-0707 or the after-hours operator: (713) 755-5050 ◦ Email reports to SEU.Reports@phs.hctx.net ◦ Contact an HCPH liaison for schools or childcare facilities. ◦ HCPH monkeypox webpage: https://publichealthharriscountytexas.gov/monkeypox • City of Houston o Monkeypox hotline: (832) 393-4220
Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The monkeypox virus is easily killed by common disinfectants.⁸ Daily disinfection is sufficient for facilities. However, if there is a suspected or confirmed case, clean all surfaces and objects they may have touched. • Wash hands before and after changing diapers, handling food, and eating. • People who are close contacts of a case should avoid sharing food and drinks until they are out of their monitoring period. • Wear gloves and a mask and avoid skin-to-skin contact if caring for a suspected or confirmed case. • Athletic equipment, toys, nap mats, and exercise mats should be cleaned after use.
Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals with monkeypox or those waiting for test results should isolate at home and not return until they have met the criteria to discontinue isolation. Isolation can often last for 2-4 weeks. Children with monkeypox should not return to the facility while contagious. Isolation may end: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ If monkeypox has been ruled out after the individual has been evaluated by a healthcare provider. ◦ If the individual has fully recovered, from monkeypox, meaning all scabs on lesions have fallen off and there is new skin growth underneath.
Vaccination	<p>Vaccination is recommended for those who were either exposed to an individual with monkeypox or those who are more likely to get monkeypox. For vaccination inquiries, please contact HCPH in one of the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Call the Monkeypox Hotline: (832) 927-0707 or the after-hours operator: (713) 755-5050 ◦ Email SEU.Reports@phs.hctx.net ◦ Contact an HCPH liaison for schools and childcare facilities

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/transmission.html>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/clinicians/clinical-guidance.html>
3. <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/monkeypox/>
5. <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/HS/htm/HS.81.htm>
6. <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/if-sick/preventing-spread.html>
7. <https://dshs.texas.gov/IDCU/disease/monkeypox/DSHS-MPX-Monitoring-Guidance-072722.pdf>
8. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/disinfectants-emerging-viral-pathogens-evps-list-q>