



Mpox (Monkeypox)

Key Considerations for Employers

Updated 12/14/22

In August 2022, U.S. public health officials declared monkeypox (now officially known as “mpox” in order to reduce stigma) a national health emergency in response to a rapidly growing outbreak that has infected nearly 30,000 people in the United States. At this time, [data](#) suggest that gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men make up the majority of cases in the current mpox outbreak. However, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, anyone who has been in [close, personal contact](#) with someone who has mpox is at risk. Take steps to [prevent getting mpox](#). If you have any [symptoms of mpox](#), talk to a healthcare provider.

How Employers Should Respond

- **Communicate clearly.** Our Communications Tips below will help you share trusted facts and avoid stigma.
- **Offer paid time off for vaccination and recovery from possible side effects.** This is especially important for workers who have been exposed to mpox and workers who may be more likely to get mpox.
- **Have a policy in place** for employees who’ve been diagnosed or exposed to mpox.
 - If an employee has mpox, they should not come to work.
 - The illness can last for 2 to 4 weeks — so if employees don’t have that much paid sick leave, have a policy in place where they can access other paid time off or apply for short-term disability.
 - Depending on the severity and duration of symptoms, mpox could legally be considered a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Affected employees may be entitled to take sick leave pursuant to state law or an employer’s policy.
 - For longer-term absences, the employee’s symptoms may be severe enough to be a serious health condition under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Even if an employee doesn’t qualify for FMLA leave, employers may have an obligation to reasonably accommodate an employee under the ADA or similar state laws.

- Remote work should be an option, too, but note that severe pain may make it impossible. However it happens, support employees' need to isolate for the duration of their illness.
 - Consider updating your COVID-19 self-attestation forms (where employees state whether they have any virus symptoms) to include [mpox symptoms](#).
 - Businesses whose employees have close physical contact with customers (for example, spas) should consider asking about mpox symptoms in pre-appointment questionnaires, as well.
 - If an employee reports an infection, keep that information confidential. Reach out to close contacts who are at risk of transmission through prolonged, close face-to-face or skin-to-skin contact and assist them with access to testing and paid time off.
 - CDC offers additional guidance for employers in [healthcare settings](#) and [congregate living settings](#).
- **Engage your LGBTQ+ employee resource groups** or other affinity networks that can help share trusted facts about mpox and support workers who may have questions or need extra support finding vaccines.
- **Reach out to your [local public health department](#)** to see if there are other ways your company can support the local response, like hosting a vaccination clinic, organizing a public town hall or sharing information about local support services available to disproportionately impacted populations.

How Employers Should Communicate

As an employer, your first goal in communicating about a public health emergency is to provide information to keep your employees and workplace safe and healthy. Don't assume that workers have all the information they need from the media or other sources. And remember: misinformation thrives in a vacuum, so don't be silent.

- **Be accurate and honest.** Currently, the majority of diagnosed cases in the U.S. have been in men who have sex with men, but anyone can get mpox.
- **Tell people how it spreads.** Mpox is [spread](#) through direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs or bodily fluids, or prolonged face-to-face contact, like during kissing, cuddling or intimate behavior. It does not spread easily and is not caught through casual contact or merely being in the presence of someone who has the virus.
- **Provide facts, not blame.** Part of your responsibility is to make clear that certain groups are at higher risk so employees in those groups know how to protect themselves and when to seek medical attention.

- **Avoiding stigma is part of keeping your team safe.** The danger of stigma isn't just that it upsets people. It also keeps from them accessing the healthcare they need, which helps infectious diseases continue to spread.
- **Dignity and respect are key.** Diseases that seem like someone else's problem have a history of making the leap to your own community. Treat others how you would want to be treated. Using "we" and "our" in your messaging makes clear that your team is in this together.
- **Highlight steps you're taking to keep people safe.** It's important to acknowledge steps that your company is taking to respond to mpox, including policies you have in place for employees who've been diagnosed or exposed to the virus, as well as policies to make it easier for workers to get vaccinated and recover from possible side effects.

Customize our [Sample Employee Email](#) to communicate with your team about mpox.

Additional Resources

- **Health Action Alliance**
 - [Mpox \(Monkeypox\): What You Need to Know](#)
 - [Sample Employee Email](#)
- **CDC:** [Mpox Portal \(En Español\)](#)
- **HRC Foundation:** [Mpox \(Monkeypox\) Resource for Gay and Bisexual Men](#)