

MONKEYPOX

Eradicating a virus through removing stigma and shame

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Inclusive Excellence Advances Health Equity

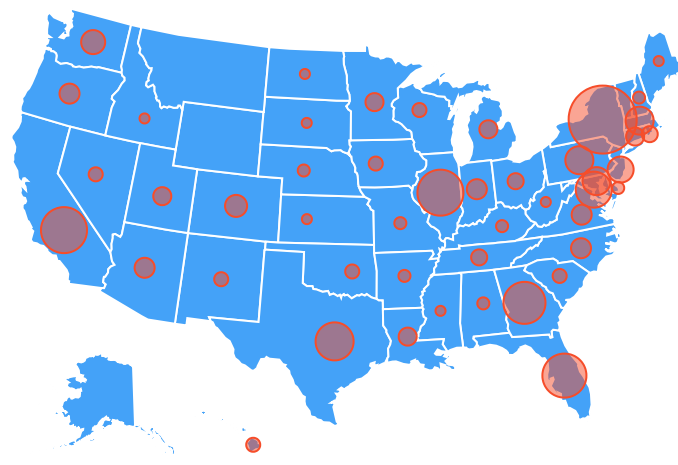
On July 23, 2022, The World Health Organization declared Monkeypox a "public health emergency of international concern."

Between 1970- 2022,

19,188

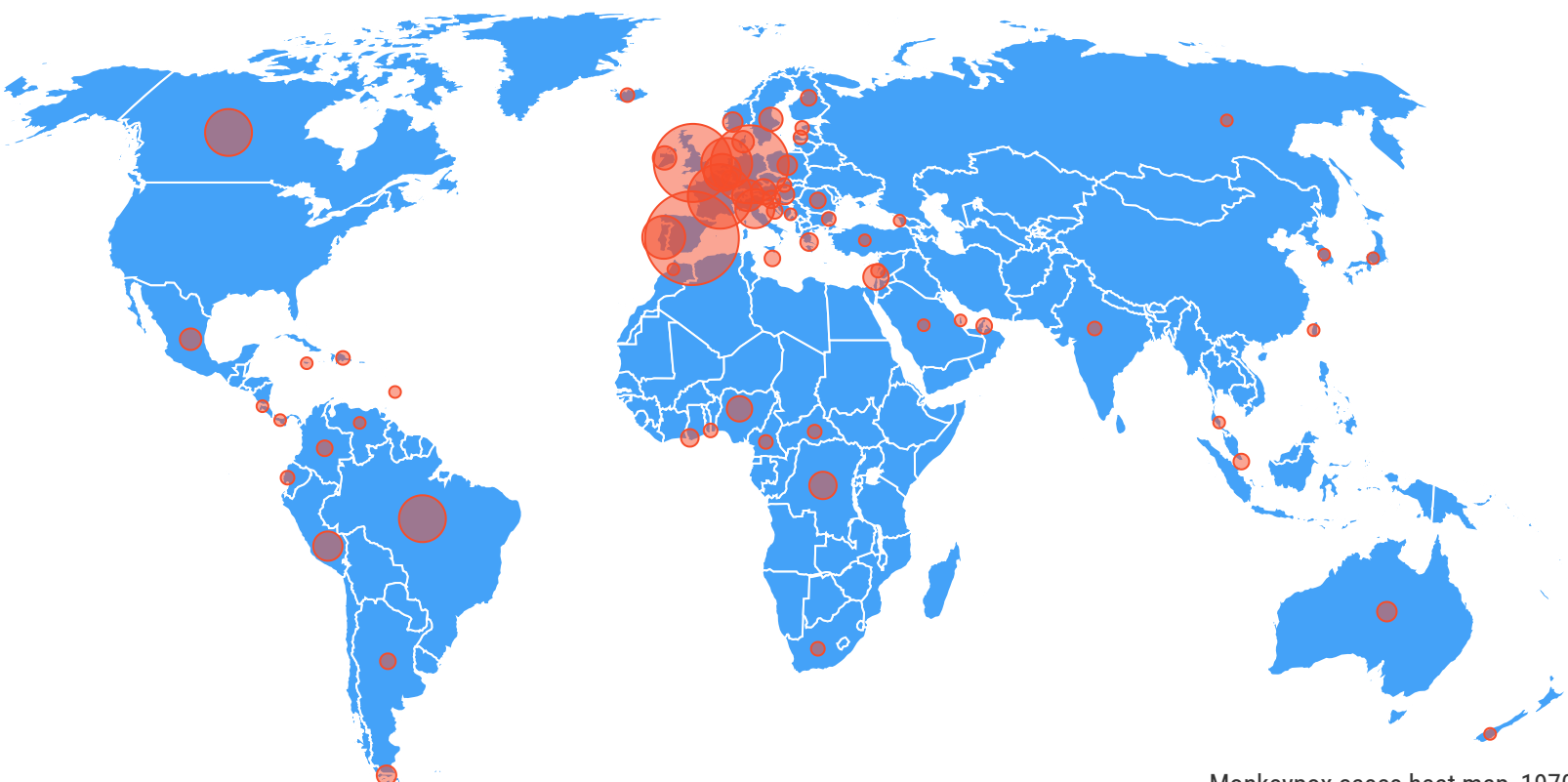
cases of monkeypox were reported

worldwide.



3,590

cases have been reported in the United States in 2022.



Monkeypox cases heat map, 1970-2022

There are 350 cases in Illinois and the number increases daily.

HOW IT SPREADS

Monkeypox spreads in different ways. The virus can spread from person-to-person through:

- direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids
- respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex
- touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids
- pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta
- Monkeypox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks. People who do not have monkeypox symptoms cannot spread the virus to others. At this time, it is not known if monkeypox can spread through semen or vaginal fluids.



What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. Monkeypox virus is part of the same family of viruses as smallpox. Monkeypox symptoms are similar to smallpox symptoms, but milder, and monkeypox is rarely fatal. Monkeypox is not related to chickenpox.



How can it be prevented?

Avoid close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like monkeypox. Do not touch the rash or scabs of a person with monkeypox. Do not kiss, hug, cuddle or have sex with someone with monkeypox. Do not share eating utensils or cups with a person with monkeypox. Do not handle or touch the bedding, towels, or clothing of a person with monkeypox.



What are the most common symptoms?

Symptoms of monkeypox can include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and backache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion
- A rash that can look like pimples or blisters that appears on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body, like the hands, feet, chest, genitals, or anus.



Vaccination

Two vaccines licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are available for preventing monkeypox infection – JYNNEOS (also known as Imvamune or Imvanex) and ACAM2000.

In the United States, there is currently a limited supply of JYNNEOS, although more is expected in coming weeks and months.

People are considered fully vaccinated about 2 weeks after their second shot of JYNNEOS and 4 weeks after receiving ACAM2000.



Removing Stigma and Shame to Advance Health Equity

Public health agencies had particularly slow and disorganized responses to the monkeypox outbreak in the U.S. The CDC, as well as other health officials, have incorrectly identified monkeypox as a sexually transmitted infection that exclusively impacts men who have sex with men. While the virus has disproportionately impacted those in the LGBTQ+ community, monkeypox CAN be transmitted to anybody who makes contact with the virus, and not only through sexual contact. The government has done little to dispel this myth.

Anti-LGBTQ+ narratives that stigmatize and sensationalize queer communities are dangerous and harken to homophobic and cisheterosexist actions that incorrectly labeled other epidemics like the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a "gay disease" despite anyone being able to contract the virus. As a result of this oppressive attitudes toward queer communities, resources are slow to be acquired and queer people may feel reluctant to come forward for treatment or the vaccine threatening greater spread of monkeypox. The slow response has resulted in lack of treatment for those experiencing painful symptoms, slow testing, and a limited vaccine response despite those resources being available and approved for use. Lack of action can result in continued negative health outcomes such as with HIV/AIDS.

Additionally, due to ongoing structural and social determinants of health such as access to transportation, inability to take off work, lack of access to online information, and poor coordination of information, vaccines meant to protect the most vulnerable communities, such as people who are poor, trans*, rural, low-income, disabled, racially marginalized, non-English speakers, undocumented people, and/or sex workers, have been taken by those who have greater access to health care information and care, such as cis white gay men.

Monkeypox can last from 2-4 weeks and those who are at the most risk for contracting the virus are already marginalized. Due to isolation requirements, this community may then experience loss of work, pay, and/or incur additional health expenses, worsening health inequity.

Those concerned with reaching equitable health outcomes should work to educate themselves and others about monkeypox and be aware of how structural and social determinants of health reproduce health inequity.

References:

- W.H.O. Declares Monkeypox Spread a Global Health Emergency. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/23/health/monkeypox-pandemic-who.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Monkeypox. <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html>
- Factsheet for Reporters on Monkeypox (MPV) and the LGBTQ Community. https://www.glaad.org/blog/factsheet-reporters-monkeypox-mpv-and-lgbtq-community?occlid=Cj0KCQjwXOXBhCARIsAL1QFCbScvL4XV2eq;fid=mm5GV811moy7o_3161HvNS5656WzW4899nwk4qon_EALw_wcB
- Misinformation is Worsening the Monkeypox Crisis and Fueling Homophobia. <https://jezebel.com/misinformation-is-worsening-the-monkeypox-crisis-and-fu-1849332901>

All information and data accurate as of 7/27/2022. Please seek updated guidance and data if necessary.

Talking about Monkeypox in class and with others

1. There have been a lot of parallels drawn between the (lack of) response between the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the response to the monkeypox outbreak, as well as the early days of COVID-19. What public health mistakes are being repeated, which ones have been learned from, and what are the dangers of failing to learn from past mistakes?
2. Currently, LGBTQ+ populations are most impacted by monkeypox. However, those in the cisgender and heterosexual communities are now reporting cases. Monkeypox in pregnant women, children, newborns, and immunocompromised people can be deadly. Additionally, the vaccine rollout for monkeypox had a slow start and there are still not enough resources available to vaccinate everybody who needs it. Consider this information in light of structural and social determinants of health. Who are the most vulnerable populations? What are the determinants of health that might impact who is able to obtain the vaccine?
3. In light of a delayed response to the monkeypox virus, queer communities have organized through social media to provide resources, the mutual aid, education, information, activism, and advocacy to expedite the response to the outbreak. What role does the community play in advancing health equity? What is the relationship between nursing and marginalized populations in advancing health equity?

To help you reflect, here are a few resources for review.

1. *We must learn from the past in responding to monkeypox* from the American Medical Association
2. *The dangerous parallel between monkeypox and AIDS* from NewsWeek
3. *Man with monkeypox describes what it was like to contract the virus* from CNN
4. *Struggle to protect gay, bisexual men from monkeypox exposes inequities* from The Washington Post
5. *As monkeypox spreads, know the difference between warning and stigmatizing people* from NPR
6. *Characterizing HIV discussions and engagement on Twitter* from Health and Technology