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Mpox

Mpox is an infection caused by the monkeypox virus. In 2022, there was an increase in cases in many countries, including Ireland. But the risk of catching it is low.

Important

The mpox vaccine programme is paused. We are working on a new plan to provide the vaccine.

We will update this page when we can offer vaccines again.

How you get mpox

Mpox spreads from person to person through very close contact.

This can include:

- sexual contact or other intimate contact (such as kissing or cuddling)
- other types of very close contact, for example with people in your household
- touching clothing, bedding or towels used by someone with the mpox rash or scabs
- touching mpox skin blisters or scabs
- the coughs or sneezes of a person with mpox when they're very close to you

Anyone can get mpox.

But currently, most cases have been found in men who are gay, bisexual or other men who have sex with men. It's important to be aware of the symptoms if you're in these groups.

If you've been identified as a close contact of someone who has mpox, you'll be contacted by health professionals.

Symptoms of mpox

It usually takes between 5 and 21 days for the first symptoms to appear.

The symptoms of mpox include:

- an itchy rash
- a high temperature (38.5 degrees Celsius or higher)
- headaches
- muscle aches
- back ache
- swollen glands
- shivering (chills)
- exhaustion
- a cough
- a runny nose

The rash usually appears 1 to 5 days after the first symptoms. Some people only have a rash. The rash can start on your face, then spreads to other parts of your body. This can include your mouth, the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet.

If mpox has been spread through sexual contact, the rash can appear around your bum and genitals. It may not spread.

The rash starts as raised spots, which turn into small blisters filled with fluid. These blisters eventually form scabs which later fall off.

[+ Mpox blisters](#)

The rash and other symptoms usually clear up in 2 to 4 weeks.

Occasionally people with a very weak immune system, pregnant women or very young babies can have a more severe illness.

Contact your local STI clinic or your GP if you have:

- a rash that looks like mpox
- been identified as a close contact of someone who has mpox

Gay men, bisexual men, and men who have sex with men, and transgender people should look out for any unusual rashes or spots on their body, especially their genitals and bum.

[→ Find an STI clinic](#)

[→ Find a GP](#)

What to do if you have mpox

If you have mpox, you will need to self-isolate until your rash is completely healed.

Self-isolation means staying indoors and avoiding contact with other people. This includes the people you live with.

If you have mpox, self-isolate until your rash has healed. Your GP can tell you when it is OK stop self-isolating.

If you live with someone who is self-isolating, avoid face-to-face contact until they have finished self-isolating.

How to self-isolate if you have mpox

Do

- ✓ stay at home
- ✓ keep away from other people until your rash heals - especially older people, anyone with a long-term medical condition, pregnant women, or children under 13
- ✓ [wash your hands properly and often](#)
- ✓ cover your coughs and sneezes using a tissue - clean your hands properly after and bin the tissue
- ✓ ask friends, family or delivery people to drop off food or supplies - if they stand back from the door, you can speak with them
- ✓ keep in touch with family and friends by phone or social media
- ✓ contact your GP, or a [GP out-of-hours service](#) if you need to

Don't

- ✗ do not have close contact with anyone
- ✗ do not hug, kiss, or have sex with anyone
- ✗ do not go to work, school or public areas
- ✗ do not have visitors into your home
- ✗ do not have close contact with your pet, if possible
- ✗ do not let your pet sleep in your bed with you

If you live with other people

Stay in your own room, with a window you can open.

Use a different bathroom to others in your house, if you can.

Wash your own clothes. Wash your items on their own.

Do not share things like food, dishes, towels or other household items.

Treatment for mpox

Mpox treatment involves relieving the symptoms. There is no specific medicine available to cure mpox.

Most people recover in 2 to 4 weeks.

Reduce your risk of getting mpox

There are things you can do to reduce your risk of getting mpox.

Do

- ✓ [wash your hands with soap and water regularly](#) or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- ✓ be aware of symptoms you or a sexual partner may have
- ✓ get vaccinated

Don't

- ✗ do not share bedding or towels with people who are unwell and may have mpox
- ✗ do not have close contact with people who are unwell and may have mpox

Counselling service for people affected by mpox

We are working with the [MPOWER Programme](#) to give free online counselling to people who:

- have been diagnosed with mpox
- are experiencing anxiety or distress about mpox - with or without a diagnosis

You can refer yourself to this service by emailing the MPOWER team.

mpower@hivireland.ie

Include your first name and mobile phone number.

Your healthcare professional can also refer you.

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