

IMAP Statement on Mpox

This statement was developed by the International Medical Advisory Panel (IMAP) in September 2022 and updated in August 2024.

About Mpox

Mpox is a viral zoonotic disease which typically occurs in tropical areas in central and west Africa. From May 2022-July 2023, multiple cases of mpox were identified in non-endemic countries, and the World Health Organization declared the mpox outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. This marked the first time many mpox cases were reported concurrently in non-endemic and endemic countries in different geographical areas. During the outbreak, nearly 100,000 people were infected, primarily gay and bisexual men, and approximately 200 people died. Globally, new infections have decreased substantially; however, rates have recently surged across 13 African countries, including some which had never reported cases of mpox before. In response, the World Health Organization has declared the mpox outbreak a Global Emergency and the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention declared a 'public health emergency of continental security'.

The infection manifests itself initially by 0-5 days of fever, intense headache, lymphadenopathy, back pain, myalgia and fatigue. The incubation

period between exposure and onset of disease is between 6-13 days, with a range of 5-21 days. The skin lesions appear 1-3 days after the fever. The rash affects almost all infected people, beginning on the face (95%) and then spreading to other parts of the body, most commonly the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. It also may develop on mucosal membranes and genitalia. The rash begins from macules and progresses to papules, then to vesicles and pustules which dry up and fall off. The lesions may be itchy or painful, and in some cases cause scarring.

The infection is self-limited and symptoms generally last 14-21 days. Most cases of the virus are mild, sometimes resembling chickenpox, and resolve without treatment within a few weeks. The case fatality ratio of mpox has ranged from 0 to 11 % in the general population and has been higher among children. The outbreak in 2022-2023 had a low mortality rate at 0.2%. Currently, the case fatality ratio in the Congo has been higher, around 3%. Severe cases occur most commonly among children and those with underlying immune deficiencies.

Transmission between humans can occur by close contact through sexual contact, respiratory secretions, skin lesions of an infected person or

objects recently touched/ contaminated such as bedclothes. Respiratory transmission usually requires prolonged face-to-face contact.

Key messages on Mpox and Sexual and Reproductive Health

Prevention

Prevention is primarily through avoiding close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like mpox. Additionally, avoid handling bedding, towels or clothing or sharing utensils or cups with a person with mpox. Normal infection-prevention protocols and behaviors, such as washing hands often with soap and water, should be followed.

People infected with mpox should isolate at home for the duration of the symptoms and avoid close physical contact, including sexual activity.

Vaccination may be available for those who are at high risk of developing disease, such as those who have been exposed to mpox through close contact or sexual contact, within 2 weeks of exposure. Prior vaccination against smallpox (which is in the same virus family) is 85% effective in preventing development of disease. A newer vaccine based on modified attenuated vaccinia virus was approved for the prevention of mpox in 2019; however, its availability outside of high-income countries has been limited. There are currently two vaccines in use against mpox and both have been recommended for use by WHO (Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization).

Pregnant and lactating persons could be at risk of developing mpox either as health care workers or being contacts of those infected with mpox. Currently available vaccine effective against orthopoxviruses is not registered for use during pregnancy. As a non-replicating, highly attenuated vaccine, however, it is probably safe to use in pregnancy and lactation.

Treatment

Clinical care for mpox should have a goal to alleviate symptoms, manage complications, and prevent long-term sequelae. Patients should be offered fluids and food to maintain nutritional status. Secondary bacterial infections should be treated as needed or indicated. An antiviral agent known as tecovirimat that was developed for smallpox was licensed by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) for mpox in 2022 based on data in animal and human studies. It is not yet widely available. Infection prevention measures, including use of personal protective equipment for healthcare providers, should be followed in healthcare settings where mpox cases are attended (for guidance: www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/clinicians/infection-control-healthcare.html).

Stigma

Key prevention information is needed for people to help them make the best-informed decisions to protect their health and that of their community. Such messages need to be delivered by trusted sources to ensure the information reaches affected communities. As anyone who comes into close contact with someone who has mpox can contract it, messages need to reach the general population and front-line health workers about recognizing and managing the infection. However, as much of the outbreak in 2022 was among men who have sex with men, targeting specific ways to reach these groups, taking into account cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds is key. Focused messaging, however, should not stigmatize or further stigmatize groups at higher risk, particularly based on sexual and/or gender identities. Lessons from HIV/AIDS, where slow-moving governmental action and poor outreach failed to contain the spread of the infection, should inform policies and approaches to target the spread of the virus and treatment of those who contract it. Additionally, women should not be overlooked; lessons should be learnt from other recent pandemics, e.g. Zika and COVID-19, where women who became pregnant and

contracted the virus faced some of the gravest consequences of the infection and during the course of the HIV pandemic, heterosexual spread became the most common pathway to infection.

Access to vaccination, care and treatment, as well as to related research must be equitable and inclusive, assured for all groups of people—including those already most marginalized.

Conclusion

IPPF is committed to rights-based, person-centred and gender transformative approaches to sexual and reproductive health care delivery. This IMAP statement aims to support Member Associations to ensure they are prepared with the latest messages and information to respond to clients' needs and provide adequate care in their facilities on Mpox prevention, treatment and stigma that may affect specific population groups of risk of the virus.

Resources

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Khalil A, Samara A, O'Brien P, Morris E, Draycott T, Lees C, Ladhani S. Monkeypox vaccines in pregnancy: lessons must be learned from COVID-19. *Lancet Glob Health*. 2022 Sep;10(9):e1230-e1231.

For more information on the outbreak: www.who.int/publications/m/item/multi-country-outbreak-of-mpox--external-situation-report-35--12-august-2024

For more information of SRHR and infectious disease outbreaks: <https://www.ready-initiative.org/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-during-infectious-disease-outbreaks-operational-guidance-for-humanitarian-and-fragile-settings/>

For more information on recovering from monkeypox: <https://www.who.int/multi-media/details/recovering-from-monkeypox-at-home>

For more information on vaccine/ antivirals: [Monkeypox | European Medicines Agency \(europa.eu\)](https://www.who.int/news/item/09-08-2024-who-invites-mpox-vaccine-manufacturers-to-submit-dossiers-for-emergency-evaluations)

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Who we are

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is a global service provider and a leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. We are a worldwide movement of national organizations working with and for communities and individuals

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