

Mpox and Safer Sex

Vaccination is an important tool in preventing the spread of mpox (formerly known as monkeypox). If you are at risk for mpox but haven't received your two-dose vaccine yet, temporarily changing some parts of your sex life might reduce the risk of exposure to the virus. This includes the time between your first and second shots of vaccine. Your protection will be highest two weeks after your second dose of vaccine.

Make a habit of exchanging contact information with any new partner to allow for sexual health follow-up, if needed.

Talk with your partner about any mpox symptoms and be aware of any new or unexplained rash or lesion on either of your bodies, including the mouth, genitals (penis, testicles, vulva, or vagina), or anus (butthole). If you or your partner have or recently had mpox symptoms or have a new or unexplained rash anywhere on your body, do not have sex and see a healthcare provider. In some cases, symptoms may be mild, and some people may not even know they have mpox.



If you or a partner has mpox or think you may have mpox, the best way to protect yourself and others is to avoid sex of any kind (oral, anal, vaginal) and kissing or touching each other's bodies – while you are sick. **Especially avoid touching any rash.** Do not share things like towels, fetish gear, sex toys, and toothbrushes.

Even if you feel well, here are some ways to reduce your chances of being exposed to mpox if you are sexually active:

- Take a temporary break from activities that increase exposure to mpox, until you are two weeks after your second dose. This will greatly reduce your risk.

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- Limit your number of sex partners to reduce your likelihood of exposure.
- Spaces like back rooms, saunas, sex clubs, or private and public sex parties where intimate, often anonymous sexual contact with multiple partners occurs – are more likely to spread mpox.
- Condoms (latex or polyurethane) may protect your anus (butthole), mouth, penis, or vagina from exposure to mpox. However, condoms alone may not prevent all exposures to mpox, since the rash can occur on other parts of the body.
- Gloves (latex, polyurethane, or nitrile) might also reduce the possibility of exposure if inserting fingers or hands into the vagina or the anus. The gloves must cover all exposed skin and be removed carefully to avoid touching the outer surface.
- Avoid kissing or exchanging spit, since mpox can spread this way.
- Masturbate together at a distance, without touching each other and without touching any rash.
- Have virtual sex with no in-person contact.
- Consider having sex with your clothes on or covering areas where rash is present, reducing as much skin-to-skin contact as possible. Leather or latex gear also provides a barrier to skin-to-skin contact; just be sure to change or clean clothes/gear between partners and after use.

- Be aware that mpox can also spread through respiratory secretions with close, face-to-face contact.
- Remember to wash your hands, fetish gear, sex toys, and any fabrics (bedding, towels, clothes) after having sex.



What should a person do if they have a new or unexplained rash or other symptoms?

- Avoid sex or being intimate with anyone until you have been checked out by a healthcare provider.
- If you don't have a provider or health insurance, visit a public health clinic near you.
- When you see a healthcare provider, wear a mask, and remind them that this virus is circulating in the area.
- Avoid gatherings, especially if they involve close, personal, skin-to-skin contact.

