

Monkeypox: What's Up, Doc?

A self-advocacy document for healthcare providers and community members.

Last updated: August 2022

Monkeypox is a viral infection, caused by a virus of the Orthopoxvirus genus. It is related to smallpox, but less severe. During the current global monkeypox outbreak, almost all cases globally, nationally, *and* provincially are in people who self-identify as gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM).

Stigma:

Recognize that this is a new outbreak, and that people who are part of the gbMSM community who come to you with monkeypox may not even have been aware of the risk or prevention options. We may be scared, embarrassed, or ashamed. Our jobs, social networks, or dignity may be at risk due to having monkeypox. We may come to you with lesions in our anus or on our genitals, which we may find embarrassing or be ashamed of.

It is imperative to patient safety and dignity that you provide care from a non-stigmatizing perspective. It is also important so that we collaborate with public health efforts to manage the monkeypox outbreak.

SOPs & IPAC Guidelines

We strongly encourage all healthcare providers to follow the standard operating procedure for monkeypox testing as laid out by your regional health authority. If this is beyond your capacity or scope of practice, please provide as much assistance as you can to the person presenting you with this document as it relates to monkeypox testing in your region. You may connect them with the [BCCDC STI clinic](#), UPCC, youth clinic, primary care or consult with a local physician

PICNET has an *Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Monkeypox*, but your institution may have relevant policies and procedures with regards to use of appropriate protocols. However, physicians on the ground have been working on updating IPAC Guidelines to better reflect the modes of transmission we're seeing in the local outbreak (which appears to be skin-to-skin contact in sexual settings). We encourage you to take any precautions you feel necessary to ensure your safety, but insist that when interacting with patients, do so in ways that promote patient safety and protect patient dignity.

Treatment Guidelines & Treatment Options

Original guidance on the local monkeypox outbreak described cases as self-limiting and mild. Since then, we have seen several cases that are severe in both presentation and patient pain/discomfort. Health authorities (including VCH) are updating clinical guidance to better reflect the seriousness of pain/discomfort of some cases we have seen provincially.

*Adapted from:
BC Centre for Disease Control
The World Health Organization*

Please seek out the most current clinical guidance but know that these are often behind the experiences and growing expertise of those on the ground: both patients, and local clinicians at the forefront of the outbreak.

In BC, gabapentin and codeine have been used to help those with pain. Hydroxyzine and oral lidocaine have been used for swelling and oral pain. These treatments do not work for everyone, and patients have been prescribed more aggressive pain control when needed.

Patients may need to be reassessed frequently as symptoms progress rapidly.

Some individuals develop secondary bacterial infections (skin infections) that require oral antibiotics.

Creating a safe environment wherein a patient can honestly describe their level of pain and/or discomfort (often in the genitals and/or anus which we may find embarrassing) is imperative to providing monkeypox patients with appropriate care. This will help ensure that our communities do not become hesitant of engaging with the healthcare system, hindering efforts to identify, and manage contacts of cases to support controlling the local outbreak.

Want to consult the ID specialist seeing the majority of monkeypox cases in BC?

Contact the RACE line at www.raceconnect.ca or call toll free 1-877-696-2131

Or call **HIM** for us to connect you: **236-688-4153**

Other Resources:

- [BCCDC – Monkeypox information page](#)
- [Health Canada – Monkeypox Outbreak Update Page](#)
- [BCCDC – Information for healthcare providers about monkeypox BC Centre for Disease Control.](#)
- [US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) –Social Gatherings, Safer Sex, and Monkeypox](#)