

Monkeypox: Protecting Workers Through Awareness and Action

Attention: Health care employers and non-health care employers with workers who provide personal care, domestic and hotel housekeeping, diagnostic laboratory, veterinary, dental, and post-mortem care services to people who may have monkeypox.

Monkeypox in Washington State

Recently, cases of monkeypox have been detected in Washington state. It is important to be aware of how workers can be at risk and what you can do to protect them.

Exposure to monkeypox among workers is unlikely and risk to the general public is currently low, however, risk for workers in certain industries or workplaces may increase if monkeypox becomes more widespread.

How Occupational Exposure Can Occur

Monkeypox spreads by:

- Direct skin-to-skin contact;
- Touching surfaces and materials contaminated with body fluids or scabs from an infected person; and
- Breathing the air during close, face-to-face interactions.

Some examples of activities that might lead to exposure include:

- Performing physical exams on patients with a skin rash, open sores (lesions), or scabs.
- Dressing or providing other direct care to infected patients or clients.
- Changing bedding that was in direct contact with an infected person's exposed skin, especially if contaminated with material from scabs, lesions, or sores.
- Caring for post-mortem infected remains.
- Handling tissue specimens from infected patients.

Awareness of Signs and Symptoms of Monkeypox

Monkeypox usually begins with flu-like symptoms. Lesion formation, the most noticeable sign of monkeypox, can develop within 1-4 days later. They can often spread to other parts of the body like the hands, feet, chest and face.

Other symptoms can include:

- Fever /Chills
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Fatigue/exhaustion
- Muscle and/ or backaches
- Headache

The order in which the skin rash and the other symptoms present can vary, with some persons only getting the rash.

A person is considered contagious from the time symptoms start until the rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks.

For more information visit
www.doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/illness-and-disease-z/monkeypox



General Safety Precautions at Work

Employers:

If monkeypox continues to spread in Washington state, here are some precautions you can take to keep your employees safe:

- Require non-employees (e.g., clients, customers, visitors, etc.) to not visit the workplace if they have monkeypox or unexplained symptoms consistent with monkeypox, if possible.
- Provide adequate handwashing facilities/stations for employees.

If a worker employee may have been exposed to monkeypox, follow isolation guidance from the state DOH and CDC. Contact the appropriate health care provider for clinical care, including testing and post-exposure prophylaxis (medication to keep you from developing monkeypox after you've been exposed.)

Develop policies and train workers to:

- Avoid close, direct skin-to-skin contact with persons who may present skin rash, scabs or open lesions.
- Avoid contact with objects and materials that a person with monkeypox has used. For example, avoid handling or touching the bedding, towels, or clothing of a person with monkeypox. Never shake used bedding and clothing since this could release infectious particles into the air.
- If required to have close contact with a person suspected or known to have monkeypox or items they have used, wear appropriate PPE including:
 - Gown;
 - Gloves;
 - Eye protection;
 - A NIOSH-approved N95 Respirator according to Chapter 296-842 WAC; and
 - Use safe work practices when handling sharps.

If present in the workplace, have any person with known or suspected monkeypox wear a well-fitting facemask or respirator and keep lesions covered to the extent possible.

Do not share eating utensils, cups or other personal items (e.g., headsets, towels, etc.) with a person with known or suspected monkeypox.

Instruct workers to wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially before eating or touching their face and after using the bathroom. If soap is not readily available, provide hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Wipe down commonly used workplace surfaces and post visual instructions reminding employees about this near handwashing or sanitizing stations. Refer to the EPA's List Q for registered disinfectants recommended for monkeypox. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions on the product label for suggested surface contact time.

Safety Precautions for Health Care Workplaces

Health care workers who provide treatment to infected patients, including housekeeping staff that may handle contaminated items, should use standard, contact, and droplet precautions. Follow the DOH and CDC infection control guidance for health care settings and provide workers with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

For more information on required personal protective equipment (PPE) and special procedures required in health care settings see www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-topics/topics/monkeypox.

L&I Safety and Health Information

Visit www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health.

Contact L&I

Email EyeOnSafety@Lni.wa.gov, or call 1-800-423-7233.

Consultation Program

L&I provides consultations, training, and technical assistance at no cost to employers. Get more information and schedule a free confidential consultation at www.Lni.wa.gov/SafetyConsultants.

This alert is intended to bring awareness to potential safety and health hazards in the workplace. It is not a rule and creates no new legal obligations. L&I recommends employers and workers review the safety and health rules for specific requirements at www.Lni.wa.gov/SafetyRules.

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