

Issued: 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## Mpox declared as Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) by WHO

### What is mpox?

- Mpox is a zoonotic disease caused by an orthopoxvirus, which can cause a rash or other lesions, swollen lymph nodes, fever, headaches, muscle aches, and fatigue. When present, rashes and lesions often being in the genito-anal areas, but can also involve the face, body, hands, feet, and inside the mouth. Presentations can be varied, and can include proctitis without rash/lesions, rashes without prodrome, or even just a single lesion.
- Symptoms of mpox may closely resemble other diseases such as syphilis, herpes, chicken-pox, scabies, molluscum, or other skin infections.
- Mpox is spread through close contact with sores, through body fluids, or from contaminated objects. This may occur during sexual activities, but can also occur through other types of physical contact, or by droplet exposure in specific contexts e.g. shaking out contaminated bed linens.
- Generally mpox resolves on its own, but for some people, such as immunocompromised people, it can cause severe disease and deaths have been recorded overseas.

### Current situation

- Mpox has been declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) by the World Health Organization on 14<sup>th</sup> August. This is in response to an upsurge in cases of mpox and emergence of clade Ib mpox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which then spread to neighbouring countries including the Central African Republic (CAR), Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda.
- There is early evidence that this emerging clade of mpox may cause more severe disease and may be more transmissible, but further information is being collected.
- Single cases of clade Ib mpox have been detected in Sweden and Thailand, in travellers returning from central Africa. **NO cases of clade Ib mpox have been detected in Australia to-date.**
- Since 2022, mpox which has been circulating in Australia has been clade IIIb mpox. There have been 445 cases of mpox in 2024 in Australia to-date, mostly occurring in NSW, Victoria, and QLD. There has been a single case detected in NT in a returned traveller (acquired overseas).
- The National Rapid Assessment Team (RAT) has determined the risk in Australia is currently **low** to moderate from mpox.

- NT Health and partners are closely monitoring the situation nationally, and working on preparation to ensure mpox is quickly detected and managed in the NT.

## Prevention

- Vaccines are available to help protect against mpox.
- JYNNEOS® is the preferred vaccine for use in Australia, based on its safety profile and ease to administer.
- Recommended groups for mpox vaccination include:
  - Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men
  - Sex workers
  - People living with HIV
  - Laboratory workers who work with orthopoxviruses
  - Healthcare workers (depending on risk of exposure)
- **Vaccines can be easily accessed from Clinic 34 sexual health clinics across the NT.** Vaccines may be requested by primary and remote health clinics for eligible clients who cannot access Clinic 34 – please contact the local Clinic 34 service or CDC unit to discuss.
- More information about vaccines can be found here: [Mpox vaccines](#) and [Mpox - AIH](#)

## What to do if you suspect mpox

- Ensure you and your staff use appropriate PPE, including gown, gloves, surgical/N95 mask, and eye protection for the assessment and treatment of clients with suspected mpox. For information about mpox infection prevention and control, see [Mpox IPC for Clinicians](#).
- Make sure to take a comprehensive travel and exposure history from the client.
- Take PCR swabs from at least 2 lesions (if 2 are visible).
- Call ahead to the laboratory to let them know if you are sending samples for mpox testing.
- **Contact your local CDC unit to notify the suspected case.**
- More information on the diagnosis, testing, and management of mpox has been compiled by the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) here: [mpox \(monkeypox\) | ASHM Health](#)

## Further information



Visit: [Mpox | NT Health](#)  
[mpox \(monkeypox\) | ASHM Health](#)

## Contact

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