

Delaware County Health Department (DCHD) Monkeypox Information for K-12 Schools and Early Childhood Education Programs

Currently, the risk of monkeypox to children and adolescents is low.

Monkeypox virus can infect anyone – including children – if they have close, personal, often skin-to-skin contact with someone who has monkeypox.

Schools and early childcare settings should follow their everyday operational guidance that reduces the transmission of infectious diseases. If there is a monkeypox exposure, DCHD will help in considering appropriate actions to prevent the spread of the virus.

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus, part of the same family of viruses that cause smallpox. Monkeypox symptoms are similar to smallpox symptoms, but milder, and monkeypox is rarely fatal.

Symptoms of monkeypox can include fever, headache, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes, chills, respiratory symptoms and a rash that can look like pimples or blisters that appears on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body, like the hands, feet, chest, or genitals. The rash goes through different stages before healing completely. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks.

What is the risk to children?

Currently, the risk of monkeypox to children and adolescents is low. Several illnesses can cause a rash and fever in children, such as hand-foot-mouth disease and chickenpox. A fever and rash should be evaluated by a medical professional, who can determine what testing or treatment the child needs.

Monkeypox is spread through close, personal, sustained, skin-to-skin contact with someone who has the disease. Although less common, monkeypox may also spread by touching contaminated objects (such as toys or eating utensils) or fabrics (clothing, bedding or towels).

Should we get vaccinated?

There is no need for widespread vaccination for monkeypox among children or staff at K-12 schools or early childhood settings. However, a vaccine is available that can help prevent monkeypox in people who have been exposed if it is given soon after exposure. Vaccination should be considered on an individual basis in consultation with the health department.

Most children can attend school and other school-related activities even if they have had contact with someone with monkeypox. The health department will provide specific guidance should an exposure occur.

What to do if someone in our facility is diagnosed with monkeypox?

If someone with monkeypox has been in a school or childhood education program, the setting should follow their everyday operational guidance to reduce the transmission of infectious diseases. This includes enhanced cleaning and disinfection, working in collaboration with the DCHD and communicating with parents and families.

What is the Delaware County Department of Health doing?

DCHD is partnering with the Pennsylvania Department of Health to investigate reports of monkeypox, work with providers to assess individuals with symptoms, and identify and vaccinate close contacts. Schools and childcare programs with questions may reach out to DCHD directly via DCHDinfectioncontrol@co.delaware.pa.us or 484-276-2100.

More information can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/schools/faq.html> and <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/teens-young-adults.html>



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[Graphics courtesy of CDC]