

Information on Monkeypox in Del Norte County

August 12, 2022



Dear Community members,

As many of you already know, last week Humboldt County detected its first confirmed case of Monkeypox after many cases having been detected nationwide. While we like to believe that we are somewhat protected against these infectious diseases given our remote and rural surroundings, as we saw with COVID-19 the reality is that these illnesses will reach our area eventually.

Fortunately, there are some characteristics of this latest viral threat that make it easier to manage than COVID-19:

1. Monkeypox is spread by skin-to-skin contact or through sharing items (clothing, bedding, towels) with an infected individual. It can also be spread through close interactions with infected individuals though this mainly happens when living or caring for someone with symptoms. Monkeypox also has a good prognosis and is rarely fatal.
2. There already exists a vaccine that protects against Monkeypox infection, Jynneos. This was developed and stockpiled prior to this outbreak of Monkeypox and is also used to protect against the related virus, Smallpox. The vaccine is available in limited quantities to counties nationwide to respond to outbreaks and exposure events, as well as for inoculation of people who are at risk of contracting Monkeypox. We have not

yet been allocated the vaccine due to our small jurisdiction with no active Monkeypox cases, however we anticipate in the upcoming weeks having some doses available.

3. An antiviral drug, Tpoxx (tecovirimat), was also stockpiled by the federal government in the event of an outbreak of orthopox viruses. This drug has activity against Monkeypox and is available in limited quantities for patients diagnosed with Monkeypox.

4. Accurate testing for Monkeypox is already available.

It's worth noting that we are again confronted with an infectious disease that has been prevalent enough to garner news attention nationwide, and that the scientific community has already prepared a response in the form of a highly-effective vaccine and antiviral medication. Infectious diseases are a fact of life and even if they may rarely cause mortality in our otherwise healthy community, it is still wise to protect ourselves against preventable disease. Importantly, diseases have no political affiliation and the most effective way to avoid contracting them and passing them to other community members is to get vaccinated if you are at risk and to avoid behavior that will put you or others at risk.

If you believe you may have been exposed to or contracted Monkeypox, please seek a medical evaluation by a physician or local emergency department. Post-exposure prophylaxis with the vaccine can be provided in the case of a confirmed exposure, and therefore seeking medical attention early is of utmost importance.

For more information about Monkeypox, including symptoms and at-risk populations, please see the following links:

- Q&A from CDPH: cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Monkeypox-Questions-andAnswers.aspx

- Information on Monkeypox from the CDC:

cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/index.html

- Social gatherings and safer sex from the CDC: cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/specificsettings/social-gatherings.html