



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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Three Allegheny County Residents Test Positive for Orthopoxvirus *Health Department offers residents guidance and resources*

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny Health Department (ACHD) has confirmed that three residents have been diagnosed with orthopoxvirus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is conducting confirmatory testing for monkeypox virus, which is a type of orthopoxvirus. Public health nurses are in the process of providing the patients with guidance and resources. The department has begun the contact tracing process with the affected individuals.

“The Health Department has been monitoring and working with our state and federal public health agencies since the monkeypox virus started appearing in countries that do not typically experience cases of this illness,” explained ACHD Director Dr. Debra Bogen. “The department is prepared to assist both residents and our community partners as cases of this virus are diagnosed.”

As of June 30, 2022, there have been three confirmed cases of orthopoxvirus in Allegheny County, all within the past 24 hours. The individuals are all adult males in their 20s and 30s. None of the patients required hospitalization. All are currently in isolation at home.

“The ACHD has a highly honed case investigation process and is ready to help contain any possible community spread of the monkeypox virus in Allegheny County,” remarked ACHD Chief Epidemiologist LuAnn Brink. “To contain the virus effectively and efficiently we need residents to work with our nurse case investigators to determine the source of the infection and if it has spread to others. We appreciate any and all assistance.”

Monkeypox is contracted when an individual comes in prolonged contact with the sores, scabs, respiratory droplets or oral fluids of an infected person. Most infections have occurred through close, intimate situations, such as cuddling, kissing and sexual contact. Other possible avenues for infection have occurred by encountering contaminated materials, such as clothing, bedding and other linens used by an infected person.

“The contagiousness of monkeypox is very different from COVID-19,” said ACHD Clinical Services Deputy Director Dr. Barbara Nightingale. “It is spread through much closer contact with someone who has the illness.”

Symptoms of monkeypox include: fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, fatigue and swollen lymph nodes. A rash typically develops a few days after the initial symptoms. However, not all individuals infected with monkeypox develop any symptoms prior to rash, so it is critical that those who think they were exposed to the virus get tested to limit the spread of the disease.

The area’s health care systems, clinics and other care providers have been testing patients who have presented with possible monkeypox symptoms for several weeks. Testing is available at the ACHD’s Public Health Clinic, as well as throughout the county, with more commercial labs being able to test for the virus in the coming weeks. Individuals interested in being tested for monkeypox should contact their health care provider and make an appointment, especially if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms and have a new rash, sores; or if they have been in close contact with an infected person.

Testing is also available at the ACHD's Public Health Clinic located at 1908 Wylie Avenue. Clinic hours are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and Wednesdays noon to 7:30 p.m. To learn more about the Public Health Clinic, [visit its webpage](#) or call 412-578-8081 .

The Public Health Clinic also has access to medication and vaccines for individuals who are identified during disease investigation that may benefit from their administration.

The most effective modes of prevention against contracting monkeypox are:

- Practice safe sex, including the use of condoms and dental dams
- Avoid contact with bedding and other materials contaminated with the virus
- Avoid contact with people who may be infected
- Avoid skin to skin contact with someone with a rash
- Wash your hands with soap and water
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) when caring for infected persons

Since the first case of monkeypox appeared in the United States in May 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has asked health care providers to be alert for patients who have rash illnesses consistent with monkeypox, regardless of whether the patient reports travel or other risk factors.

Monkeypox is not related to chickenpox, but in some cases may present symptomatically like the typical childhood illness. The chickenpox vaccine does not protect residents against the monkeypox virus.

The CDC has made a monkeypox vaccine available for some individuals that meet a very specific close contact criteria and is ideally administered within four days of exposure to the virus.

Preliminary research has shown that residents who have been recipients of the smallpox vaccine may experience some minor protection against severe outcomes from the monkeypox virus.

To date, 396 people in the United States have tested positive for monkeypox, with 13 of those diagnoses coming from Pennsylvania.

The Health Department's nurses are available to answer questions, as well as provide guidance and resources to anyone who believes they have come in contact with monkeypox. They can be contacted by calling 412-687-ACHD (412-687-2243).

Learn more about monkeypox by visiting the CDC's website: cdc.gov/monkeypox.

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