

Mpox is spreading in NSW



N SAFETY NOTICE 020/24

Issue date:	11 July 2024
Content reviewed by:	Health Protection NSW
Distributed to:	Chief Executives; Directors of Clinical Governance; Director, Regulation and Compliance Unit
KEY MESSAGE:	Local transmission of mpox is occurring in NSW. Clinicians should have a low threshold for mpox testing in at-risk groups presenting with a compatible illness.
ACTION REQUIRED BY:	Clinicians
REQUIRED ACTION:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distribute this Safety Notice to all relevant clinicians and clinical departments 2. Ensure that clinicians and other relevant staff are aware of the recommendations in this Safety Notice and take appropriate action. 3. Confirm receipt and distribution of this Safety Notice within 72 hours to: MOH-Healthprotection@health.nsw.gov.au
DEADLINE:	15 July 2024
We recommend you also inform:	Directors, Managers and Staff of: Emergency Departments, Sexual Health Services, Gastroenterology Departments, Infectious Diseases Departments, Virtual Care Services.
Website:	https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sabs/Pages/default.aspx http://internal.health.nsw.gov.au/quality/sabs/index.html
Review date:	October 2024

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Situation

In the past 3 weeks, 22 mpox cases were notified in NSW, compared to one in the previous 6 months:

- increase is due to local transmission in NSW and multiple other Australian states
- gay and bisexual men are predominantly affected
- cases have presented to general practice, sexual health services, and emergency departments
- timely diagnosis can prevent further transmission

Background

Since May 2022, there has been a global outbreak of mpox mainly in men who have sex with men:

- transmission is primarily skin-to-skin contact, including sexual contact
- vaccination (two doses of JYNNEOS®) is recommended for gay and bisexual men, their sexual partners, and sex workers
- vaccination is recommended as post-exposure prophylaxis in unvaccinated, high-risk contacts, ideally within 4 days of exposure

Clinical assessment

Mpox can mimic other sexually transmitted infections (e.g. genital herpes or syphilis). Symptoms include:

- lesions (sometimes only 1-2) – typically on the anogenital or oral skin or mucosa; may be flat (macules), raised (papules), filled with fluid (vesicles or pustules), or crusted
- proctitis, anal pain and/or bleeding – this may be the only symptom (i.e. no visible lesions)
- fever, malaise, lymphadenopathy and/or myalgia (in some cases only)
- presentations are usually milder in vaccinated individuals

Recommendations

- Test all men who have sex with men with compatible symptoms – this includes people with proctitis without visible lesions. Test regardless of severity, vaccination status, or travel history.
- Collect lesion fluid from a deroofed pustule or vesicle using a dry swab. If there are no fluid-filled lesions, send lesion tissue or crusts in a dry container. A dry swab of the anorectal mucosa can be sent for patients with anal symptoms without visible lesions. Send swabs **without** transport media.
- If mpox is considered the most likely diagnosis, notify the public health unit (PHU) by telephone as soon as practicable (1300 066 055) – the PHU may begin contact tracing before diagnosis has been confirmed depending on the risk assessment.
- Standard and transmission-based precautions, including contact and droplet precautions, are the minimum level of personal protective equipment for suspected or confirmed mpox.
- Supportive care (e.g. oral and/or topical analgesia, stool softeners if anal lesions are present) is sufficient for most cases. In patients with severe disease or immunocompromise, antiviral treatment may be considered – contact the NSW Specialist Service for High Consequence Infectious Diseases for further advice (1800 424 300, 24 hours, 7 days per week).

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Further information

Australian STI Management Guidelines (includes detailed advice on specimen collection)

<https://sti.guidelines.org.au/sexually-transmissible-infections/monkeypox/>

Clinical Excellence Commission Infection Prevention and Control Information for clinicians: mpox

https://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0003/728148/infection-prevention-and-control-mpox.pdf

NSW Health mpox fact sheet for cases

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mpox-cases>

NSW Health post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for mpox fact sheet

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/mpox-pep.aspx>