

Briefing: Monkeypox

May 2022

We are writing to you regarding the handful of national cases of Monkeypox which are currently being monitored by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). To be clear we are not aware of any cases within the West Midlands or Solihull at present (25 May 2022).

However, given the increased media interest and number of cases in the UK, total number of 71 (as of 25 May), the UKHSA has asked us to share an update with key partners to make them aware of the current situation.

The following information has been provided by the UKHSA communications team:

You may have heard about monkeypox in the news recently. But what is it, what are the symptoms and how can you access help and information?

Monkeypox is a rare illness caused by the monkeypox virus and one of the symptoms is a rash that is sometimes confused with chickenpox. It is usually associated with travel to Central or West Africa but cases have been occurring in England with no travel links.

Monkeypox can be spread when someone comes into close contact with an infected person. The virus can enter the body through **broken skin**, the **respiratory tract** or through the **eyes, nose or mouth**.

If you get infected with monkeypox, it usually takes between **five and 21 days** for the first symptoms to appear. Symptoms include **fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills and exhaustion**.

A rash can develop, often beginning on the face, then spreading to other parts of the body. The rash changes and goes through different stages - a bit like chicken pox - before finally forming a scab, which later falls off. ***There are some groups such as the very young, pregnant women, and immunosuppressed for whom it would become more serious.***

The virus can spread if there is close contact between people through:

- touching clothing, bedding or towels used by someone with the monkeypox rash
- touching monkeypox skin blisters or scabs
- the coughs or sneezes of a person with the monkeypox rash

Anyone concerned they could be infected should see a health professional but **should make contact with the clinic or surgery ahead of a visit. NHS 111 can also give advice.**

UKHSA is investigating the recent cases in England. A notable proportion of early cases detected have been in gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. and UKHSA is

urging this community in particular to be alert to any unusual rashes or lesions and to contact a sexual health service without delay.

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

It usually takes between **5 and 21 days** for the first symptoms to appear.

The first symptoms of monkeypox include:

- a high temperature
- a headache
- muscle aches
- backache
- swollen glands
- shivering (chills)
- exhaustion

A rash usually appears **1 to 5 days after the first symptoms**. The rash often begins on the face, then spreads to other parts of the body. Symptoms may be similar to those of chickenpox as both viruses can cause a rash. Monkeypox rash might look like raised spots, which then might turn into small blisters filled with fluid. These blisters tend to be bigger than in chickenpox cases. They will then form scabs that will later fall off.

The chance of your pupils having monkeypox is very slim if they haven't travelled recently or been in close contact with someone who has travelled or has been diagnosed with monkeypox.

For all monkeypox cases, extensive contact tracing is taking place so those who had close contact should be informed by UKHSA.

Although school children are not currently identified as a high-risk group, we have been advised by UKHSA to emphasise the importance of infection prevention and control:

Hand washing: It is important that you wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet, or after touching used clothing and linens. Alcohol hand sanitiser is an alternative if you are unable to access a wash basin. Always perform hand hygiene before eating, drinking or taking medication.

Cleaning: Clean surfaces and high touch areas frequently. It is best to use detergent and warm water followed by a bleach-based disinfectant (1000 ppm solution).

Laundry (if applicable): Wash any clothing, or linens, in a washing machine at the hottest wash the garment will allow. Clothing or linen items should not be shaken or handled in a manner that may disperse infectious particles.