

Dept. of Health Services: Expands monkeypox vaccine eligibility criteria for Wisconsinites

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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is expanding the eligibility criteria for who can get vaccinated to protect themselves against monkeypox. Following [updated guidance\(link is external\)](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the new eligibility criteria allow for more people who may be at a higher risk for being exposed to the monkeypox virus to get vaccinated. Making the monkeypox vaccine available to more people is a critical step to preventing further spread of the disease. DHS encourages all eligible Wisconsinites to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

The monkeypox vaccine is safe and is available at [approximately 80 locations](#) throughout Wisconsin. Contact your [local or tribal health department](#) or dial 211 if you need assistance finding a location offering the vaccine near you.

“People who are eligible for the monkeypox vaccine should make an appointment to get their vaccine as soon as possible to protect their health,” said Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ryan Westergaard. “Early data show that receiving at least one dose of the monkeypox vaccine provides some level of protection against the disease. This is encouraging news, but it is important for people to get both doses for maximum protection.”

Wisconsinites who meet any of the following criteria can get vaccinated. People who are newly eligible for the monkeypox vaccine are listed in bold below:

- Known contacts who are identified by public health through case investigation, contact tracing, and risk exposure assessments

- Presumed contacts who may meet the following criteria:
 - People who know that a sexual partner in the past 14 days was diagnosed with monkeypox.
- People considered to have elevated risk of exposure to monkeypox in the future:
 - Gay men, bisexual men, trans men and women, any men who have sex with men, and gender non-conforming/non-binary individuals who:
 - Have recently had multiple or anonymous sex partners. This may include people living with HIV and people who take HIV pre-exposure because of increased risk of sexually transmitted infections.
 - **Have new diagnosis of one or more nationally reportable sexually transmitted diseases (for example, acute HIV, chancroid, chlamydia, gonorrhea, or syphilis).**
- People who attended or had sex at a commercial sex venue or an event or venue where there was known monkeypox transmission or exposure.
 - **Sexual partners of people with the above risks.**
 - **People who anticipate experiencing the above risks.**
- People in certain occupational exposure risk groups:
 - Clinical laboratory personnel who perform testing to diagnose orthopoxviruses, including those who use polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assays for diagnosis of orthopoxviruses, including Monkeypox virus.
 - Research laboratory workers who directly handle cultures or animals contaminated or infected with orthopoxviruses that infect humans, including Monkeypox virus, replication-competent Vaccinia virus, or recombinant Vaccinia viruses derived from replication-competent Vaccinia virus strains. Laboratory staff working with lesion swabs that may contain orthopoxviruses. This includes staff that handle swabs of lesions from suspect monkeypox cases or test for things other than orthopoxviruses, including Varicella zoster virus or Herpes virus. This also includes microbiologists that do standard bacterial cultures from these lesion swabs.
 - Certain health care providers working in sexual health clinics or other specialty settings directly caring for patients with sexually transmitted infections.

[Initial data\(link is external\)](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that eligible people who did not receive the monkeypox vaccine were around 14 times more likely to become infected with monkeypox than those who were

vaccinated. The monkeypox vaccine is currently only recommended for those at the highest risk of infection and is not available for the general public.

As of October 5, 2022, 81 cases of monkeypox have been identified in Wisconsin. The rate of new monkeypox cases continues to decline, but most new cases in Wisconsin and the U.S. are occurring in gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. Many social and economic factors are also contributing to communities of color being disproportionately affected by monkeypox. Vaccination rates for monkeypox remain significantly lower in people who report their race as being non-white nationally and in Wisconsin. Expanding who is eligible to get vaccinated is an important step to promoting health equity and ensuring all Wisconsinites can protect themselves against monkeypox.

DHS encourages anyone with a new or unexplained rash or sores to contact a doctor or other health care provider immediately. Everyone should avoid having close skin-to-skin contact with others who have a new or unexplained rash. For those without a provider, help is available by dialing 211 or 877-947-2211, or texting your ZIP code to 898-211.