

## HIV.gov FYI- Monkeypox Update- July 18, 2022

### **Kaye Hayes**

“Hello, I’m Kaye Hayes, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health, Infectious Diseases, at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.”

“And today I’ll be talking with Dr. Demetre Daskalakis of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention again as part of our HIV.gov FYI series.”

“As I mentioned in the past, and bears repeating, ODP and HIV.gov are proud to be part of a larger public health community.”

“And when outbreaks occur outside of HIV and potentially impact many of those we serve, we use all of our communication tools to support others in the public health community and get the word out, and that’s what we’re doing today.”

“So today, we want to share an update on monkeypox or MPX.”

“First question, Demetre. What is the status of the current monkeypox outbreak in the United States?”

### **Dr. Demetre Daskalakis**

“Thank you, Kaye, really great to see you again for our second installment of monkeypox or MPX outbreak update. So, CDC, as you know, continues to track multiple outbreaks of monkeypox that have occurred in many other countries that, again, don’t have a historical history of monkeypox activity, and that does include the United States. So, since we talked in early June, Kaye, there still have not been any deaths reported in the current outbreak in the United States, which continues to be great news.”

“As of July 15th, we have 1,814 cases in the U.S., and these mostly are occurring among gay and bisexual and other men who have sex with men. “

“So, yeah, while the overall risk to the population in the U.S. is low, the number of cases really continues to increase and, really now, we have cases reported in most U.S. states and territories.”

“CDC wants to help people make informed decisions to protect their health and the health of their community and, again, that starts like with what we’re doing today with building awareness about monkeypox that’s guided by science, and that avoids stigma.”

**Kaye Hayes**

“Great, thank you, Demetre. So, I’m going to back up a little, so make sure level-set everyone. Can you basically tell us what monkeypox is and what are the symptoms?”

**Dr. Demetre Daskalakis**

“Yes. So, monkeypox is a disease that’s caused by a virus called the monkeypox virus. Sometimes being called MPV, sometimes being called MPX. So, it’s important to see that there are a couple of different names that are out there. And it’s a relative of a virus that causes smallpox—an orthopoxvirus. And it is usually something that starts with symptoms like a fever, headache, muscle aches, exhaustion, and enlarged lymph nodes, then followed by a rash.”

“And those rashes can look a lot like pimples or blisters. They kind of look like a couple of other infections, which is why it can be confusing. It can look like something called molluscum, it can look like Shingles, it could look like herpes, it can look like a lot of different infections. During the outbreak, some patients have developed localized rashes on or near the genitals or their anus and, sometimes Kaye, they don’t have that fever or symptoms at first.”

“So, it’s not the typical presentation in all people, so important to make sure folks know a rash that is in your genitals or anus that you don’t really understand or can’t explain—that’s a reason to think about monkeypox.”

“So, monkeypox can spread between people when someone has contact with someone who has monkeypox, or actually touches materials that are contaminated with the virus. So, evidence that we have so far from the epidemiology here indicates that the virus is spreading mostly through close personal, often skin-to-skin, contact with somebody who has the disease. Monkeypox can spread to anyone through direct contact with monkeypox rashes or scabs on a person’s skin, contacts with objects, fabric, and that includes clothing, bedding, towels, and also the surfaces that have been used by someone with monkeypox. Also, through contact with respiratory secretions, but that happens through prolonged, face-to-face contact through things like kissing.”

**Kaye Hayes**

“Great, thanks Demetre, cause I think it’s really important because that’s such critical information. What is HHS doing about making a vaccine and treatment available?”

**Dr. Demetre Daskalakis**

“Great. And I think that the answer is a lot. So, multiple agencies at HHS and beyond, including CDC, are collaborating to really accelerate production and access to the vaccine. So, it’s important to say, although supply does not currently meet our demand right now, there’s major headway being made to increase vaccines for individuals who are eligible, and it’s important to say who’s eligible. So, current recommendations are focused on people with confirmed or likely exposures to monkeypox.”

“So, we’re working with our local jurisdictions to make sure that the populations being over-represented in this outbreak, like gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men are able to access the vaccine through various different strategies that focus on equitable distribution. This will become more and more clear as we have more and more vaccine enter the system.”

“On the topic of treatment. Agencies across HHS are working to make access to antiviral medications that treat monkeypox easier. These meds are currently recommended in people with severe disease. So, my advice is to talk to your medical provider and also keep your eye on local health departments’ websites and social media to learn more about how they’re rolling out their plans for vaccine, as well as these medicines.”

**Kaye Hayes**

“Great, thanks Demetre. So, when I think about it, it was almost a little over a month ago when we last spoke and kind of kicked off the series. And, I know back then, we talked about stigma associated with monkeypox. And, I think at that time, you shared that anyone, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, can get monkeypox, if exposed. And, so, based on, you know, five weeks later, and based on what we’re seeing sometimes in the media, and in the reports of how monkeypox is reported, I wanted to get your reading on what you think the climate of the stigma around monkeypox is today.”

**Dr. Demetre Daskalakis**

“Great question, thanks Kaye. So, I’ll start by saying well all need to make a concerted effort to approach this response to this outbreak in a way that informs everyone about monkeypox, but in a way that doesn’t create or propagate stigma.”

“So, our messages have been focused on giving people knowledge about the virus and, then, we’ve worked with networks of providers, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and a multitude of trusted messengers, both in the private and public domain, to make sure

that the word is out, and it's specifically out to gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, who are still over-represented in this outbreak."

"Another important way that we're addressing stigma is by focusing on harm reduction and using language that people understand and is respectful, non-stigmatizing, and informative, and it evolves as we learn more information."

"Now, I think as for the name of virus, and this comes up a bunch. This is a space to watch closely as there are a lot of discussions happening around the best way to refer to it. And I think we've already covered that a bit. Call it monkeypox, or monkeypox virus, or MPV. Some people call it MPX, so, I think that this is an area that is still developing, so just watch closely."

"I want to also say that all of us in public health are responsible to make sure we respond to the outbreak in a way that's respectful and responsive to the needs of the community, and that's specifically at this point, the LGBTQAI+ community, who are experiencing the majority of infections reported. And it's our job for, in public health, to set the example for the news media and other outlets who are reporting on this outbreak."

### **Kaye Hayes**

"Well, great. I feel like I'm talking to the right person at the right time that has the right information. I want to say thank you, Demetre. And, I want to say, I want to also welcome Harold Phillips. Harold is the Director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, and he'd like to share a word on monkeypox as well."

### **Harold Phillips**

"I want to thank CDC, OIDP, and especially Demetre and Kaye for moving forward with more information to the community on this important issue. Provider and community engagement is a critical component of the Biden Administration's broader public health response to the virus."

"This response and strategy also include rapidly scaling up and decentralizing testing to make more vaccines available to the community that need them most. The Biden Administration will continue to ensure a whole of government response and will lead the government in adapting our response as the situation evolves. I'll now turn it back to Kaye Hayes."

**Kaye Hayes**

“Again, thank you Harold and Demetre for sharing critical information about monkeypox. I encourage all of our listeners to go to [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) for additional information. Thank you.”