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Monkeypox Gets Closer to USVI Borders With at Least 4 Cases Confirmed in Puerto Rico

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While the V.I. Dept. of Health has not confirmed any cases of monkeypox in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the virus has arrived in neighboring Puerto Rico with at least four cases being confirmed on the island commonwealth, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The first monkeypox case in PR was confirmed on June 30, with local health authorities asking the population to be on alert and to stop any chain of transmission. “If you have any symptoms, isolate yourself at home and speak to a health professional immediately,” said Puerto Rico Health Secretary Carlos Mellado in a release.

According to Dominican Today, citing the PR Health Department, all the cases in Puerto Rico are males between the ages of 20 and 50.

As of June 29 there were more than 300 confirmed cases of monkeypox in the United States, and federal health officials have been expanding efforts to vaccinate people against the disease which has been confirmed in thousands of people in places around the world where it historically hasn't spread.

The CDC has recommended vaccination against monkeypox for people presumed to be exposed, and not only those confirmed to have contracted the viral disease.

The CDC's new recommendation also covers men who have sex with men, and who recently had multiple sex partners in a place where monkeypox was known to be, or in an area where the virus is spreading.

"As the number of jurisdictions with cases increases, the need for medical countermeasures, including vaccines, continues to rise," said CDC Director Rochelle Walensky.

According to the Wall Street Journal, supplies of the preferred vaccine, called Jynneos, are currently limited, so health officials said they would distribute it through a four-tier distribution strategy that gives priority to places with the highest case rates. WSJ said New York City already launched a broader vaccination effort last week, though it was hampered by limited vaccine supplies amid high demand.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is expected to immediately allocate 56,000 doses of the two-dose Jynneos vaccine from the U.S. strategic national stockpile. The vaccine is made by Danish company Bavarian Nordic AS. Authorities are expecting another 240,000 doses to be made available in the coming weeks.

The V.I. Department said in May that there were no confirmed cases of monkeypox in the territory as of May 25. The department hasn't provided an update since, an indication that the disease hasn't been detected in the territory.

What is monkeypox?

According to [WSJ](#), monkeypox is a viral disease that circulates mostly among rodents in parts of West and Central Africa. The disease was first discovered in 1958 when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in research monkeys, hence its name.

The first case in humans was recorded in 1970, in a 9-year-old boy in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Most cases since have been reported from rural, rainforest regions of the Congo Basin, although it has been detected in several countries in West and Central Africa. Nigeria, for example, typically reports a few dozen cases a year, WSJ said.

What are the symptoms?

According to [Scientific American](#), monkeypox produces smallpox-like skin lesions, but symptoms are usually milder than those of smallpox. Flu-like symptoms are common initially, ranging from fever and headache to shortness of breath. One to 10 days later, a rash can appear on the extremities, head or torso that eventually turns into blisters filled with pus. Overall, symptoms usually last for two to four weeks, while skin lesions usually scab over in 14 to 21 days.

How does monkeypox spread?

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), transmission of monkeypox virus occurs when a person comes into contact with the virus from an animal, human, or materials contaminated with the virus. The virus enters the body through broken skin (even if not visible), respiratory tract, or the mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth). Animal-to-human transmission may occur by bite or scratch, bush meat preparation, direct contact with body fluids or lesion material, or indirect contact with lesion material, such as through contaminated bedding. Human-to-human transmission is thought to occur primarily through large respiratory droplets. Respiratory droplets generally cannot travel more than a few feet, so prolonged face-to-face contact is required. Other human-to-human methods of transmission include direct contact with body fluids or lesion material, and indirect contact with lesion material, such as through contaminated clothing or linens.

Can contracting monkeypox lead to death?

While in most instances people who contract the disease recover in for 2-4 weeks, monkeypox can be deadly. According to the CDC, in Africa, monkeypox [has been shown to cause death](#) in as many as 1 in 10 persons who contract the disease.