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## Dept. of Health Establishes Procedure For Possible Monkeypox Arrival in USVI

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Though Monkeypox has not been confirmed in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the V.I. Dept. of Health has established procedures that would govern confirmed cases in the territory.

According to a release issued Sunday, the department has established the following procedure:

- Personal protective equipment should be used as universal precautions in all healthcare settings for all suspected cases.
- All suspected cases should be reported immediately to the DOH Epidemiology Division via the Epi 1 Infectious Diseases Notification form and Territorial Infectious Diseases Specialist.

- Instructions will be provided for proper specimen collection for DOH submission to the CDC or validated PR laboratory for rapid testing.
- DOH will activate a CDC consultation for medical treatment. Antivirals, such as tecovirimat (TPOXX), although not specifically for monkeypox virus, may be recommended for severe infections. The CDC will distribute as needed to the territory on demand due to limited supply.
- The Epidemiology Division will immediately commence contact tracing.
- Those identified as a high-risk exposure will be recommended for vaccination with JYNNEOS. The vaccine will be dispensed from the DOH Public Health Laboratory for injection at a DOH clinic. This vaccination is considered post exposure prophylaxis to prevent occupational or community spread.

Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion said Sunday that D.O.H. is participating with federal and local partners to respond to any local cases for treatment and outbreak prevention. The department said it will send diagnostic samples to reference laboratories and confer with CDC Monkeypox Division for access to medical countermeasure treatment and vaccine prevention.

"Our Immunization Division has secured 100 doses of the JYNNEOS vaccine for outbreak prevention within the territory," D.O.H. said. JYNNEOS is a replication-deficient smallpox vaccine that has been shown to be effective in monkeypox prevention and treatment.

Over 16,800 cases of monkeypox have been confirmed in dozens of countries — including 9 cases in neighboring Puerto Rico — the largest outbreak in the history of a virus that in the past had rarely moved beyond the borders of Africa. In light of the growing cases, the World Health Organization [on Saturday declared](#) the virus a global public-health emergency of international concern.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO's director-general, said the emergency committee believes the Monkeypox risk is moderate, except in Europe, where the WHO has concluded, based on data, that the risk is high.

The declaration was the first time the WHO has declared a global public health emergency since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the virus, which requires close contact to spread, is likely exploiting close-knit social and sexual networks among men who have sex with men.