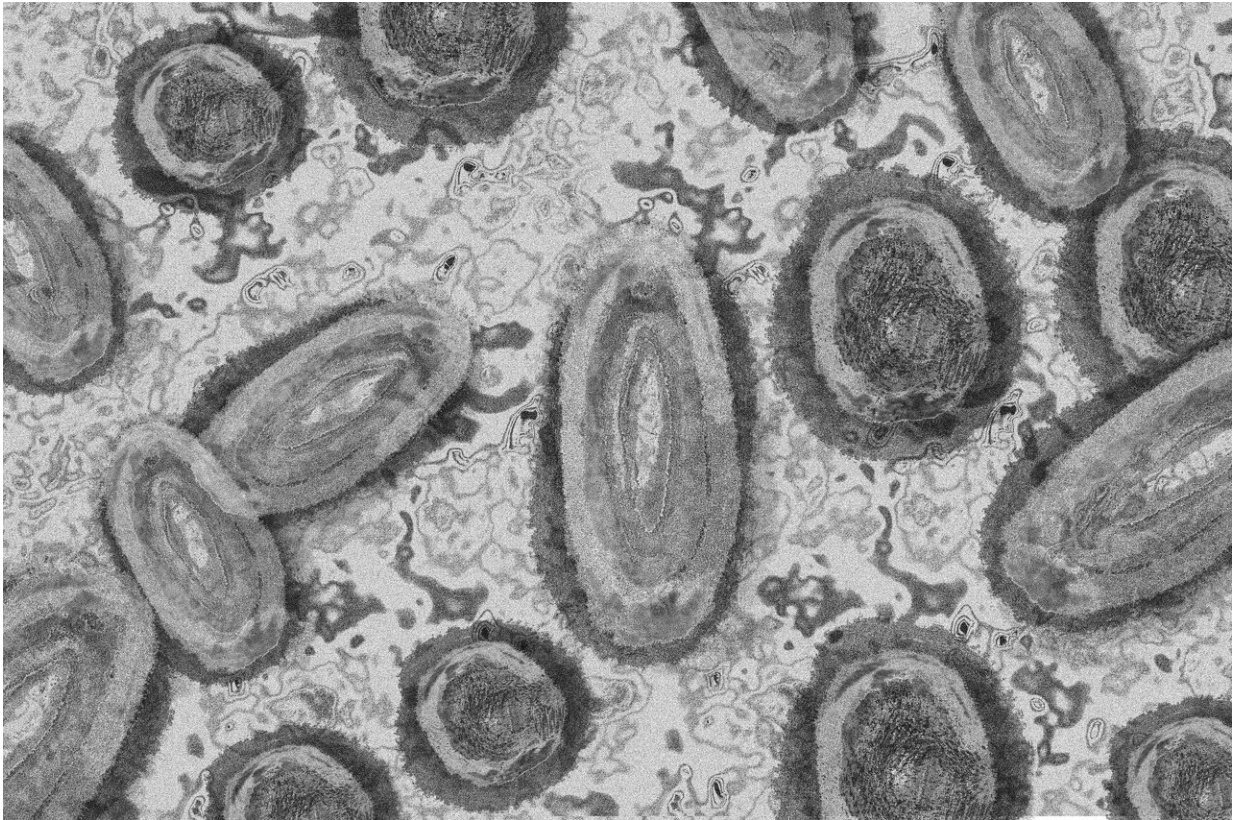


# What is monkeypox? A virologist explains

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Monkeypox has exploded into the news recently, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) closely tracking cases that have been recently reported in several countries that don't normally have monkeypox activity, including the U.S.

University of Kentucky immunology and virology expert Ilhem Messaoudi, Ph.D., answered our questions about the monkeypox virus. Messaoudi, chair of the College of Medicine's Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics, shares what you need to know about monkeypox—including symptoms, risk and treatment.

## **Q: What is monkeypox?**

A: Monkeypox is a disease caused by the [monkeypox virus](#), which is a member of the orthopoxvirus genus within the Poxviridae family. It is in the same genus as variola virus, which causes smallpox.

Is Monkeypox the next COVID? No. Unlike SARS-CoV-2, monkeypox is contagious once the person has developed symptoms, and it is not easily transmitted between individuals. Vaccines against smallpox/monkeypox are available. We also have access to therapeutics in the form of antiviral and vaccinia immune globulins.

## **Q: What are the symptoms of monkeypox?**

A: The incubation period is often seven to 14 days but can be as long as 21 days. Symptoms first start with chills, fever, aches and swollen lymph nodes. This is followed by the appearance of a rash that progresses to blisters.

## **Q: How does monkeypox spread?**

A: Monkeypox is spread via close prolonged contact with [body fluids](#) /lesion materials, for example, by caring for or interacting closely with someone exhibiting symptoms, getting bit by an infected animal or manipulating sick animals, or handling contaminated materials. It can be

spread via the respiratory route, mucosal route or through broken skin.

**Q: As of now, how would you assess the risk for Kentuckians?**

A: The risk for Kentuckians is pretty low. However, please note that there is a suspected case in Virginia. Given global travel and increased activities now that several COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, and the potential of large gatherings at upcoming events, everyone should be vigilant.

**Q: How can one best prevent or avoid monkeypox?**

A: Practice good hand hygiene, which we should all be very good at by now. If you find yourself in an area where monkeypox has been detected, avoid contact with animals that are sick or found dead. For [health care workers](#) caring for [monkeypox](#) patients, PPE including respiratory protection and patient isolation are needed.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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