

Demand for monkeypox vaccine overwhelms NYC system

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Soaring demand for the monkeypox vaccine caused the appointment system to crash in New York City, one of many places where supplies

have been running out almost as soon as they arrive.

City [health officials](#) acknowledged the frustration over the limited supply of the [vaccine](#) and vowed to build a "stable appointment infrastructure" as the vaccine supply increases.

Infections now exceed 1,000 from the [growing outbreak](#) in the U.S. Most patients experience only fever, body aches, chills and fatigue. People with more serious illness may develop a rash and lesions on the face and hands that can spread to other parts of the body.

Vaccine shortages have added to anxiety around the virus. Health officials say anyone can get monkeypox, but most cases in the U.S. have been men who have sex with men. Scientists warn that anyone who is in close physical contact with someone who has monkeypox or their clothing or bedsheets is at risk of infection, regardless of their [sexual orientation](#).

"After COVID, this should have been easy," said Daniel Ross, 25, a Harlem man who was one of the many who sought to make an appointment Tuesday. "I kept refreshing and refreshing. ... I was frustrated."

Ross soon gave up on the appointment portal, which went down minutes after it went live.

"It's going to haunt me," he said. "Me being a gay man who lives in Harlem, there's a lot of anxiety. I had four [mosquito bites](#), and I was thinking what if this isn't a mosquito bite?"

To date, New York City has administered nearly 7,000 vaccinations, while thousands more have been waiting for their chance to get inoculated against the virus. Health officials said they were expecting

14,500 doses this week.

As of Wednesday, 336 people in New York City have tested positive for orthopoxvirus, a category of disease that includes smallpox. That's a fourth more than the day before, according to [city](#) data. Officials said they were fairly certain that all of the new cases are likely monkeypox and that many more cases remain undiagnosed.

Learning from its experience with the rollout of COVID vaccines, Washington, D.C., is allowing residents to preregister for vaccination appointments. As many as 3,000 slots were to open sometime Thursday, officials said.

As news of the outbreak spread, Jeff Waters asked his doctor to be vaccinated before the Baltimore man left for a trip to Europe, where cases have been rising. "They said 'Sorry, we just don't have them here,'" Waters recalled.

Weeks later, the first signs of a monkeypox hit him while at dinner with a friend. He developed terrible headaches, a 102-degree (38.9-degree Celsius) fever, and intense chills.

"I feel grateful. I had a mild case," Waters said.

New York City is giving priority for the vaccine to men who have had anonymous sex with other men or who have had multiple partners over the past two weeks.

Symptoms include rashes or sores that resemble pimples or blisters. They can sometimes be painful but usually not fatal. Most people don't require hospitalization and recover within two to four weeks.

Infections spread by direct contact with rashes, scabs or body fluids,

according the CDC. It can spread through kissing, sex and body contact. In some cases, prolonged face-to-face exposure, as well as unwashed laundry contaminated by the virus, could lead to infection.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that commercial laboratories have been developing ways to test for the virus. The CDC said the Mayo Clinic in Minneapolis beginning this week would be accepting samples from across the country to boost the country's testing capability.

"This will not only increase testing capacity but also make it more convenient for providers and patients to access tests by using existing provider-to-laboratory networks," CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said in a statement earlier this week.

The prevalence of gay men among people infected with the virus has prompted fresh worries over stigmatizing LGBTQ populations.

Jay Jurden, a New York City comic, expressed concern about his inability to secure a vaccine, particularly because of the ramifications in a city with tens of thousands of gay men.

"If they say there's a vaccine available, people should be able to get it—or at least the website should work," Jurden said. "I'm not even saying that everyone should be able to go get it tomorrow, just that the website should work."

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