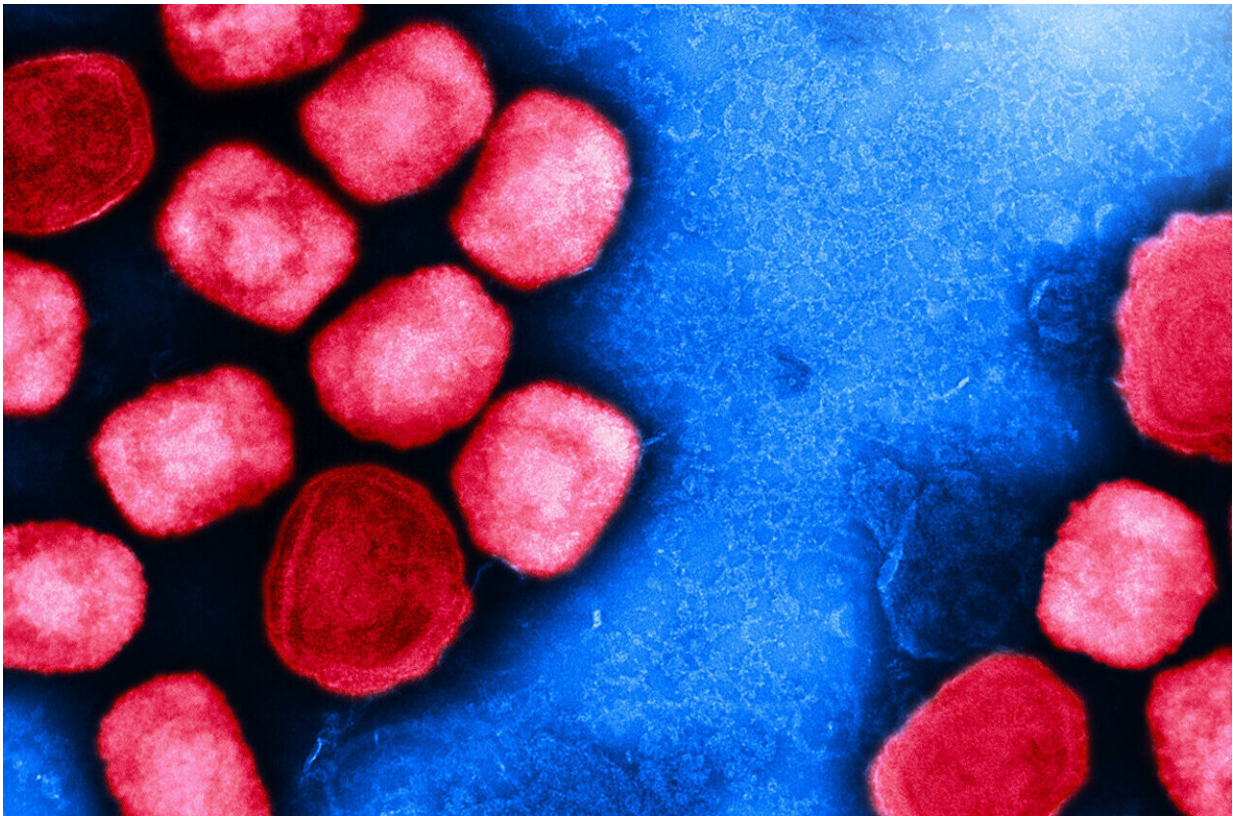


CDC encourages mpox vaccination to prevent summer outbreak

May 26 2023, by Hanna Webster



Colorized transmission electron micrograph of mpox virus particles (red) cultivated and purified from cell culture. Image captured at the NIAID Integrated Research Facility (IRF) in Fort Detrick, Maryland. Credit: NIAID

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report encouraging those at risk for the virus mpox—formerly called

monkeypox—and in areas with low vaccination rates to get vaccinated.

The study is based on statistical modeling that takes into account total U.S. mpox cases since May 2022 and varying levels of [vaccine](#) protection across the country. It found that the risk of a future outbreak depends on the level of community protection. More than 592,000 men who have sex with men (MSM) live in areas with risk of future mpox outbreaks and sustained infection, according to the CDC report, released Thursday.

Dr. Ken Ho, an infectious disease physician with UPMC who led efforts to contain mpox spread in Allegheny County, said the study's findings make sense from a public health perspective, calling it a model of how mpox could come back.

"This is sort of a really, really well-educated guess ... it provides guidance on how we should be moving forward."

Mpox is not considered a [sexually transmitted disease](#), but it can be spread through close physical contact as well as the sharing of linens such as towels and sheets. During last summer's nationwide outbreak, mpox disproportionately affected the LGBTQ+ community, but anyone can become infected.

A virus in the same family as smallpox, mpox can cause [skin lesions](#), fever, chills, muscle aches and swollen lymph nodes. While symptoms are typically more mild than with smallpox, lesions can lead to complications if they occur in areas like the genitals, rectum or near the eye.

"Focusing these vaccination efforts in low-coverage areas, and even in high-coverage areas, among MSM who are younger and newly sexually active and among groups with disproportionately low vaccination

coverage, can help protect both individual persons and the entire community against a resurgence of mpox," the CDC said in the report. "CDC continues to recommend a full 2-dose course of the JYNNEOS vaccine for MSM and others at risk for Monkeypox virus exposure."

Allegheny County has not had a case of mpox since December 2022, according to data on its website. Starting in June, a total of 71 infections were reported to the Health Department. It has previously encouraged the community to get vaccinated through social media and dating apps. But as Pride Month inches closer and weather warms, getting vaccinated as a precaution can help prevent outbreaks, experts say.

"We learned last year that mpox is dangerous and it can spread quickly," said Dr. Sarah McBeth, the medical director for Allies for Health and Wellbeing and a physician. "We also learned that vaccination works and bringing the vaccine to those most at risk—gay and bisexual men who have multiple partners—can prevent this from blowing up again."

The JYNNEOS vaccine, which can both prevent mpox and retroactively treat an exposed person within four days, requires two shots four weeks apart for maximized protection and is offered throughout Allegheny County. The CDC has reported that 1,222,510 doses of the JYNNEOS vaccine have been administered in the U.S., as of May 23. Local JYNNEOS vaccination data was not immediately available.

"Vaccination is the best way to prevent getting mpox, but if someone comes into contact with someone who already is sick with mpox, we can also give the vaccine after the exposure to hopefully prevent more serious symptoms," said Patricia M. Klatt, the clinical director of the Pitt Vaccination and Health Connection Hub . "We are really encouraging anyone who is interested to come into our center to get this free [vaccine](#) ."

"Mpox is not gone, and we're going to be following it very closely," said Dr. Ho. "People who have an unusual rash should get checked out for mpox, and those at risk should talk about vaccination with their provider."

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