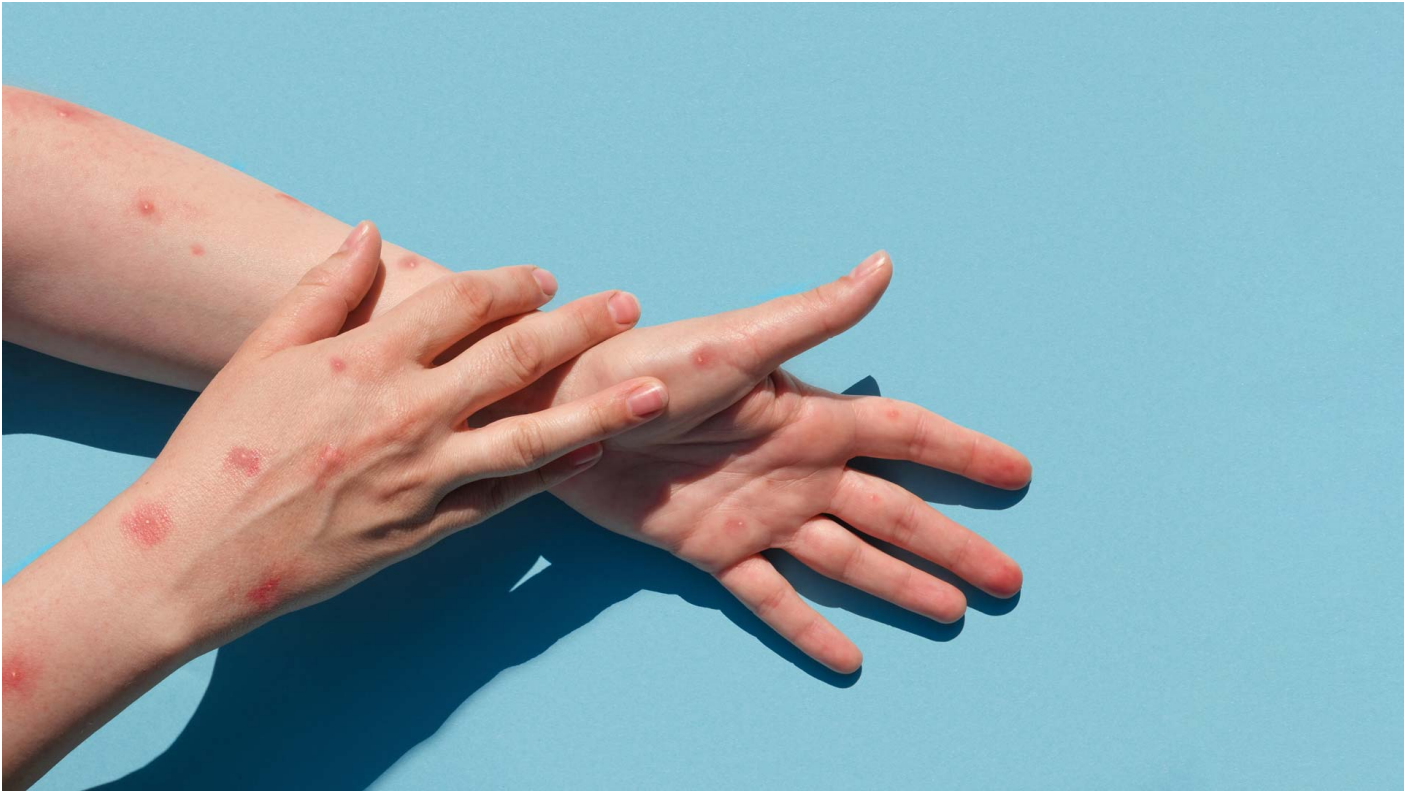


How do you catch monkeypox?



How do you catch monkeypox? How infectious is it? Are there treatments or vaccines?

Dr. Michel Martínez, an infectious disease specialist at [TecSalud](#), explained that **monkeypox** is an **infectious-contagious disease** that will not reach the proportions of COVID-19 because it has a **lower contagion rate**.

The specialist explained that currently, a patient can infect **two to three more people**, while the **Omicron subvariants of COVID-19** can reach up to **16 people**.

Dr. Martínez told [CONECTA](#) how this disease spreads, which was declared a global health emergency by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

Cómo se contagia la viruela del mono width="900" loading="lazy">

How do you catch monkeypox? - Sexual transmission

Dr. Martínez said that the primary transmission route for **monkeypox has been sexual**.

“The primary route of transmission is by sexual contact, through fluids or contact with lesions caused by monkeypox.”

*“A patient may not be aware of these lesions because they may be in an **anorectal or vaginal area**, which can’t be seen with the naked eye, and that increases the chance of it being passed on. That’s why we say that **sexual contact** is the primary route to catch monkeypox,”* he said.

According to Dr. Martínez, more than 70 of the world’s cases have been linked to **sexual contact** as the primary route of transmission.

- Close physical contact

Dr. Martínez said that another route of transmission is through direct contact with a lesion caused by monkeypox.

“The risk of just living with someone, with prolonged physical contact, is enough to get infected. It doesn’t even have to be sexual.”

- Inhalation of respiratory droplets

Similar to how COVID-19 spreads, monkeypox transmission can occur through **inhalation of respiratory droplets** from an infected person.

*“That’s why we must continue with COVID measures, such as the **use of face masks**.”*

- Through contact with objects

Dr. Martínez said **it hasn’t been proven** so far that contact with **fomites** or objects close to the patient is another route of transmission for monkeypox.

*“(However), we recommend the use of **personal utensils**, and **your own bathroom**, as well as other measures.”*

- Maternal-fetal transmission

Transmission from a pregnant woman to her baby has not yet been proven.

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What is the incubation period of monkeypox?

Dr. Martínez said that the **incubation period**, which is the time between exposure to the virus and the earliest symptoms, can vary on average from **six to thirteen days**.

*“But it can last **up to 21 days**. Therefore, 21 days is the **isolation** period required for a person suspected of being infected.”*

After incubation comes the **symptomatic phase**, in which patients experience fever, tiredness, sore throats, and headaches.

*“Something characteristic in these patients is that they present **lymph node growth**, lymphadenopathy in medical terms, in the neck, armpits, or groin.”*

The skin lesion phase is next, says the specialist, which mainly affects the torso and face, and then spreads to the limbs.

“Patients are considered non-infectious to others when their lesions have healed.”

In general terms, the disease can last from two to four weeks.

“The primary route of transmission is by sexual contact, through fluids or contact with lesions caused by monkeypox.”

How is it diagnosed?

Dr. Martínez says that diagnosis is based mainly on the **identification of lesions that are characteristic** of this disease.

“These occur on the torso, face, and then the limbs. There are many lesions in the genital area. That is why specialists such as gynecologists and urologists are probably the first contact for people with monkeypox.”

Dr. Martínez says that this disease has caused long-term problems or even death in immunosuppressed people such as those with cancer and HIV and those undergoing chemotherapy and transplants.

“Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable,” he said.

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Available treatment and vaccines

Dr. Martínez says that more than 95 percent of cases are **symptomatic** and can be treated with paracetamol and oral or intravenous hydration.

He added that, unlike COVID, this disease already has specific treatments that could be mass-produced if necessary.

*“Specific medications should be for **patients who are at risk of disease progression**, as with COVID.”*

The vaccine already has several specific processes, which could lead to its mass production **when the WHO requests it.**

*“Adults over the age of 55-60 were almost certainly vaccinated against smallpox, which gives **cross-protection** of up to 70 percent.”*

The expert does not recommend traveling to the United States to get vaccinated and says that this vaccine should be reserved for **first-contact health personnel** and those who are at **risk**, such as immunosuppressed people.

Tips to avoid catching monkeypox

Dr. Martínez says that although they are close to declaring this infection a sexually transmitted disease, more studies are still needed to corroborate this.

*“At the same time, we recommend the use of contact barriers, such as **condoms**.”*

If you have lesions, you must see a doctor and isolate.

“Anyone can catch this disease. Let’s avoid discriminatory comments such as saying this infection only affects the LGBT+ population. Anyone can catch it regardless of gender or age.

“There’s no need to panic. We have the tools to tackle this disease,” he concluded.

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