

Vaccination to help protect against monkeypox



**Important information for
before and after exposure to monkeypox**

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare viral infection that usually causes a high temperature (fever) and a body rash that lasts a few weeks.

The risk of catching monkeypox in Scotland is low.

How is monkeypox spread?

You can catch monkeypox from close contact with a person with monkeypox through:

- touching blisters or scabs and having any skin contact (including during sex)
- touching clothes, bedding, towels or personal items of a person who has a monkeypox rash, blisters or scabs
- coughs or sneezes.

Monkeypox does not spread very easily between people.

For more information on monkeypox visit
www.nhsinform.scot/monkeypox

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

After a person catches monkeypox, symptoms usually start 5 to 21 days later. Most people get better by themselves over 2 to 4 weeks, but severe illness may occur.

The first symptoms that are experienced can include:

- high temperature (fever)
- headache

- flu-like symptoms, including muscle and back aches, shivering and tiredness
- swollen glands (in the neck, armpits or groin)
- a blistering rash that usually starts 1 to 5 days after the other symptoms. It may start on the face or in the genital area and may spread to other parts of the body.

The skin lesions (pox) go through four phases. They start as flat spots that turn into raised spots, then to blisters and finally heal by scabbing or crusting over. People can pass on monkeypox until the last phase, including from any scabs.

Monkeypox rash can sometimes be confused with other diseases that can look similar, like chickenpox.

The vaccine

As monkeypox is caused by a virus similar to the one that causes smallpox, vaccines designed for smallpox are expected to prevent or reduce the severity of monkeypox. The vaccine used in Scotland contains a virus that has been modified so that it cannot grow in the human body. This Modified Vaccinia Ankara (MVA) vaccine was developed as a much safer form of the smallpox vaccine. Although not specifically licensed for the prevention of monkeypox in Europe, this vaccine has been used in the UK in response to previous monkeypox incidents.

The vaccine helps the immune system (the body's natural defence system) produce its own protection in the form of antibodies against the smallpox virus.

MVA vaccines do not contain smallpox virus and cannot spread or cause smallpox.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommends the use of MVA vaccines as part of the response to monkeypox and to help prevent it.

Who is offered the vaccine?

The vaccine is recommended only for people who are at higher risk of developing monkeypox.

- **Pre-exposure:** this includes those at highest risk but who have not yet had significant contact with someone with confirmed monkeypox. This includes gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men who are at higher risk including those who have multiple partners, participate in group sex or attend sex on premises venues. This also includes some healthcare workers in high risk settings where they may care for a patient with monkeypox.
 - A single dose of vaccine should be offered as soon as possible. A second dose may be offered at least 28 days after the first dose for those at risk of monkeypox exposure.
- **Post-exposure:** this includes those who have had significant contact, including sexual contact and healthcare workers in high risk settings, with someone with confirmed monkeypox.
 - The vaccine is most effective when given within 4 days from the date of exposure to prevent the onset of the disease. However, it can be given up to 14 days after exposure for those at high risk of ongoing exposure and those at risk of more severe disease. This may reduce the symptoms of disease but may not prevent it. You will be offered one dose of the vaccine. You will be advised if you need any further doses.

How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine is usually given by an injection in the upper arm.

Are there any reasons I cannot have the vaccine?

You should not have the vaccine if you have previously had a sudden life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of an MVA vaccine or any ingredient of the vaccine including those present in

very small amounts, such as chicken protein, benzonase, gentamicin or ciprofloxacin.

It is also important to tell the person giving you the vaccine if you:

- have a high temperature
- have atopic dermatitis (atopic eczema)
- are living with HIV or any other condition or treatment leading to a weakened immune system
- are pregnant, planning to have a baby or breastfeeding.

You can also let them know if you have a minor infection such as a cold, if you are taking or have recently taken any other medicines or if you have recently received any other vaccine.

You can be given this vaccine even if you have received a smallpox vaccination in the past. However, you may be at increased risk of side effects so speak to the person giving you your vaccine.

Fainting after vaccination is quite common, so you should wait for 15 minutes after the vaccination before you drive.

Is the vaccine safe?

MVA vaccines meet the required standards of safety and effectiveness. Once a vaccine is in use, its safety continues to be monitored.

The MVA vaccine was approved for use in the European Union (EU) in 2013, for immunisation against smallpox in adults. It currently does not have approval for immunisation against monkeypox in the EU. However, the same vaccine is marketed in the USA as JYNNEOS and received Food and Drug Administration approval for prevention of both smallpox and monkeypox in September 2019. For this reason, you may receive a vaccine that has been packed and labelled for use in the US, but it is considered 'unlicensed' or 'off-license' in the UK. This should not make any difference to you, as your health care professional is recommending the vaccine in line with national advice.

Are there any side effects?

Like all medicines, the vaccine can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them. The common side effects are:

- a headache
- aching muscles
- nausea
- tiredness
- chills
- fever
- joint pain, pain in the extremities
- loss of appetite
- pain, redness, swelling, hardness, itching, discolouration, a lump or bruising at the injection site.

Around 1 in 10 people may have chills and fever, but these should not last more than a few days. If you experience any of the side effects listed above, you should rest and take the correct dose of paracetamol to help relieve the symptoms.

Do not take medicines containing aspirin if you are under the age of 16.

If you have atopic dermatitis (atopic eczema), you may experience more intense local skin reactions such as redness, swelling and itching, and other general symptoms such as headache, muscle pain, feeling sick or tired. You may also experience a flare-up or worsening of your skin condition.

This information is only a guide. If you are concerned about any side effects speak to your health professional or call **NHS24** on **111** for free.

Call **999** immediately if you experience difficulty in breathing, dizziness, swelling of the face and neck or prolonged fainting, confusion or unconsciousness. These symptoms may be a sign of a serious allergic reaction.

Reporting side effects

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines by visiting **yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk** or by calling the Yellow Card hotline on **0800 731 6789** (9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday).

For more information you can:



visit **nhsinform.scot/MVAvaccine**



call **0800 22 44 88** (open 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, and also provides an interpreting service)



textphone **18001 0800 22 44 88**.



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