

Mpox Update: New Cases Reported in Ontario

Update to York Region health care providers as of March 15, 2023

Ontario's Ministry of Health issued an update to clinicians on the ongoing concern of mpox transmission in Ontario. Please refer to the attached Ministry document and see below for highlights.

Health care professionals are recommended to keep mpox as part of their differential diagnosis, consider testing in risk groups with compatible signs/symptoms and continue to promote first and second doses of Imvamune® vaccination.

Patient friendly resources to learn more about mpox are available on the Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance website (gmsa.ca).

Current trends in Ontario

New cases of mpox have been reported in Ontario since January 2023 with no clear epidemiological link and no international travel. Mild and subclinical infections are suspected to be the cause of ongoing transmission. While mpox activity has declined from 2022 numbers, more than 20 countries have reported new cases over the past few weeks.

Mpox has mainly, but not exclusively, affected gay, bisexual, and men who have sex with men (gbMSM) who have more than one, new, and/or anonymous sexual partners. There have not been any cases of mpox in children reported in Canada and few cases among cis-gender women.

Clinical Presentation, Testing and Reporting

Mpox has a broad range of clinical presentations with common symptoms that include fever, new rash/lesions in the mouth, genital, and/or peri-anal region, rectal pain, or lymphadenopathy. Emerging evidence suggests that the clinical presentation of mpox in vaccinated individuals may be more mild or subclinical.

In at-risk groups mentioned above, use a lower threshold to test for mpox virus in those with compatible symptoms, and consider screening and testing for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Testing and specimen collection information for mpox [may be found here](#).

If you suspect mpox, please call York Region Public Health to report it:

Telephone: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 73588 (Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)
After-hours line: 905-953-6478 (after 4:30 p.m. and 24/7 on weekends and holidays)

Vaccination

Imvamune® (authorized in Canada for protection against mpox) is a two-dose series, spaced apart by at least 28 days. Pre-exposure mpox vaccination continues to be available to eligible groups detailed in the attached Ministry document.

In Ontario, as of the end of February 2023, less than 20% of people who received a first dose of Imvamune® received their second dose. **Please recommend your eligible patients receive both doses of vaccine.**

York Region Public Health continues to offer mpox vaccination, now administered through our Sexual Health Clinics (see below) by appointment. Each appointment is provided one-to-one in a private

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room. To book an appointment, patients should call 1-800-361-5653 and a Public Health Nurse will assist them over the phone.

Sexual Health Clinic locations:

- Vaughan (9060 Jane Street)
- Richmond Hill (50 High Tech Road)
- Newmarket (17150 Yonge Street)
- Markham (4261 Highway 7)
- Georgina (20849 Dalton Road)

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Ministry of Health

Mpox in 2023: Information for Clinicians

Version 1.0 - March 10, 2023

There have been new cases of mpox in Ontario since January 2023 with no clear epidemiological link, and cases continue to occur globally.

Mild and subclinical infections are suspected to be the cause of ongoing transmission. Clinicians should keep mpox on their differential diagnosis, have a low threshold to test in risk groups with compatible signs/symptoms, and continue to promote 1st and 2nd dose vaccination.

Education

The Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance website (www.gmsh.ca) provides **patient friendly** resources to learn more about mpox.

Epidemiology

- While there has been a significant decline in mpox cases globally, more than 20 countries have reported new cases over the past few weeks.
- There have been several new cases of mpox reported in Ontario recently. No epidemiological links between cases have been identified and no cases reported international travel.
- The main route of mpox virus transmission is direct close contact (skin-to-skin), particularly through sexual contact. Other routes of transmission, including respiratory transmission and close but non-direct contact (i.e., non-sexual household contacts) has not been observed in Ontario.
- Mpox has mainly, but not exclusively, affected gay, bisexual, and men who have sex with men (gbMSM) who have more than one, new, and/or anonymous sexual partners. There have not been any cases of mpox in children reported in Canada and few cases among cis-gender women.

- Note that a sizable proportion of cases have HIV infection and may have concomitant sexually transmitted infections.

Vaccination

- Imvamune® (authorized in Canada for protection against mpox) is a two-dose series, spaced apart by at least 28 days. In Ontario, as of the end of February 2023, less than 20% of people who received a first dose of Imvamune® have received a 2nd dose of vaccine.
 - Note that delays between doses of a vaccine series do not require restarting the series.
 - Since 2nd doses were originally not available due to unknown evolution of the outbreak and limited vaccine supply procured for emergency use, many at-risk individuals may not be aware that a second dose is required to maintain protection.
- People with a history of smallpox vaccine should receive 1 dose of Imvamune®.
- Eligibility for Imvamune® for pre-exposure vaccination in Ontario is as follows:
 - Two-Spirit, non-binary, transgender, cisgender, intersex, or gender-queer individuals who self-identify or have sexual partners who self-identify as belonging to the gay, bisexual, pansexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) community AND at least one of the following:
 - Had a confirmed sexually transmitted infection (STI) within the last year;
 - Have or are planning to have two or more sexual partners or are in a relationship where at least one of the partners may have other sexual partners;
 - Have attended venues for sexual contact (e.g., bathhouses, sex clubs) recently or may be planning to, or who work/volunteer in these settings;
 - Have had anonymous sex (e.g., using hookup apps) or may be planning to; and/or
 - Are a sexual contact of an individual who engages in sex work.
 - Individuals who self-identify as engaging in sex work or are planning to, regardless of self-identified sex or gender.

- Research laboratory employees working directly with replicating orthopoxviruses.
- Household and/or sexual contacts of those identified for pre-exposure vaccination eligibility in parts (1) and (2) above **AND** who are moderately to severely immunocompromised or pregnant.
- Recent Ontario data have shown that persons who have received at least one dose of Imvamune® are less likely to report severe symptoms and to require hospitalization than persons who have not been vaccinated.
- Recent studies have shown vaccine effectiveness to be between 66-83% for patients with a 2 dose vaccine series.
- Direct your eligible patients (see below) to this [website](#) for a list of clinics where they can book their vaccine appointment. Vaccine appointments are available throughout Ontario.
- With increased travel occurring and anticipated increases over the coming months and into the summer, it is strongly recommended that eligible individuals complete their Imvamune® series at least a couple of weeks prior to traveling.

Clinical Presentation & Testing

- Mpox has a broad range of clinical presentations with common symptoms that include fever, new rash/lesions in the mouth, genital, and/or peri-anal region, rectal pain, lymphadenopathy.
 - Emerging evidence suggests that the clinical presentation of mpox in vaccinated individuals may be more mild or subclinical so in at-risk groups, use a lower threshold to test.
- In the at-risk groups mentioned above - [test for mpox virus](#) in those with compatible symptoms, and consider screening and testing for other STIs.
- [Specimens](#) should be taken of skin lesions in patients with a rash; rectal swabs for those with rectal pain/lesions. Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs can be used when a patient does not have a rash but other compatible signs and symptoms.
- In risk groups presenting with skin lesions, depending on the clinical presentation, diagnostic tests should include mpox in addition to testing for syphilis, HSV, VZV.
- Children with a rash compatible with hand foot and mouth do not need mpox testing unless they have risk factors (e.g., contact with a case).

Isolation and Public Health Advice

If you strongly suspect mpox, please call your local public health unit to report.

- Self-isolation for patients in whom you are considering mpox as part of your differential diagnosis is dependent on their clinical presentation:
 - Patients with fever and/or respiratory symptoms are required to self-isolate. They should also be advised to avoid direct contact with others including sexual activity.
 - Patients who only have skin lesions that can be covered (e.g., clothing, bandages) are not required to strictly self-isolate but should avoid direct contact with others, including sexual activity, until the lesions have fully healed.
- Patients with a negative mpox virus test can discontinue self-isolation but should be advised to continue to avoid lesions coming into direct contact with others.
- Public Health will follow-up with patients who are positive for mpox.

Treatment

- The anti-viral tecovirimat (TPoxx®) is available for mpox patients at risk of (e.g., severely immunocompromised) or experiencing severe disease.
- The efficacy of tecovirimat in the treatment of mpox has not been formally evaluated in clinical trials, but use is reasonable on the basis of its efficacy against smallpox, animal data, and unpublished data in humans with mpox.
- A randomized controlled trial of tecovirimat (PLATINUM-CAN) is launching in Canada very soon (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT05534165>); clinicians seeing patients with mpox of any severity are encouraged to refer patients to study sites to be considered for participation. In Toronto, contact darrell.tan@unityhealth.to or sharon.walmsley@uhn.ca.
- Given the limited supply of TPoxx® available in Ontario, TPoxx® should be requested based on the eligibility criteria described in the [Mpox Antiviral Guidance for Health Care Providers](#). Refer to Appendix A for information that must be provided as part of the request.
- To request TPoxx® contact the Ministry of Health Emergency Operations Centre (MEOC) at EOCOperations.MOH@ontario.ca or by calling the Healthcare Provider Hotline at 1-866-212-2272.