

What Is Chickenpox and How Is It Perceived

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The hands and feet of a 4-year-old girl with chickenpox in Liberia.

Symptoms of chickenpox include a rash that begins on the face and spreads to the body.

Cases of monkey pox - a rare and little known disease - are being investigated in European countries including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia.

On Friday, Britain confirmed that the number of cases more than doubled, bringing the total to 20.

Health Minister Sajid Javid said 11 new cases had been approved and most of the cases were minor.

The UK government has bought stocks of the smallpox vaccine to protect against chickenpox.

How Common is Monkey Pox?

Monkey pox is caused by the monkey pox virus, a member of the same family of viruses as smallpox, although it is much less severe and experts claim the chances of infection are low.

It occurs mainly in remote parts of Central and West African countries, near tropical rainforests.

There are two main strains of the virus - West African and Central African.

Two of the infected patients in the UK have traveled from Nigeria, so they are likely to suffer from the West African strain, which is usually mild.

Another case was a health worker who collected the virus from one of the patients.

For more recent cases there are no known connections with each other, or any history of travel. They seem to have caught him in the UK from spreading in the community.

The UK Health Agency says anyone with concerns that they may be infected should see a healthcare professional, but contact the clinic or surgery before the visit.

What are the Symptoms?

Initial symptoms include fever, headache, swelling, back pain, sore muscles.

Once the heat is broken, a rash may develop, which usually begins inside, and then spreads to other parts of the body, most often the hands and feet.

The rash, which can be very itchy or painful, changes and goes through various stages before a scab is finally formed, which goes down later. The lesions can cause scarring.

The infection usually goes away on its own and lasts between 14 and 21 days.

Chickenpox: A health care worker is the third case of illness in the UK.

How do you Perceive It?

Chickenpox can spread when someone is in close contact with an infected person. The virus can enter the body through broken skin, the airways or through the eyes, nose or mouth.

It has not previously been described as a sexually transmitted infection, but it can be transmitted through direct contact during sexual intercourse.

It can also be spread by contact with infected animals such as monkeys, rats and squirrels, or by virus-contaminated objects, such as bedding and clothing.

Chickenpox virus particle

Image Source, Science Photo Library

Caption,

Chickenpox virus particle

How Dangerous is it?

Most cases of the virus are mild, sometimes similar to chickenpox, and ignore themselves within a few weeks.

However, monkey pox may be more severe and has been reported to have caused death in West Africa.

Are Gay Men at Higher Risk?

Although some cases have been observed in gay and bisexual men, anyone who comes in close contact with someone who has chickenpox can get the virus.

The British Health Agency said a "prominent rate" of recent cases in the UK and Europe has been found in gay and bisexual men "so we especially encourage them to be alert to symptoms and seek help if concerned".

How Common Are Outbreaks?

The virus was first detected in a captive monkey and since 1970, sporadic outbreaks have been reported in 10 African countries.

In 2003 there was an outbreak in the US, the first time it was seen outside Africa. The patients contracted the disease from close contact with willow dogs infected by small mammals imported into the country. A total of 81 cases were reported, but none resulted in death.

In 2017, Nigeria experienced the largest known outbreak. There were 172 suspected cases and 75% of the victims were men between 21 and 40 years old.

What is the Treatment?

Outbreaks can be controlled by preventing infections.

The smallpox vaccine has been shown to be 85% effective in preventing monkey pox.

Britain has bought doses of the smallpox vaccine, but it is unclear how many stab wounds may be given.

Antiviral drugs may also help.

Should the Public Care?

Experts say we are not on the verge of a national outbreak, and according to the UKHSA, the risk is low.

Professor Jonathan Bull, Professor of Molecular Virology at the University of Nottingham, said: "The fact that only one of the 50 contacts of the primary patient infected with chickenpox shows how bad an infectious virus is.

"It is not right to think we are on the verge of a national outbreak."

UKHSA monitors those who have been in close contact with patients to offer advice and supervision

Cases of Monkey Pox Have Been Studied in Europe, The USA, Canada and Australia

The hands and feet of a 4-year-old girl with chickenpox in Liberia

Image source, Getty Images

Caption,

Symptoms of chickenpox include rash, fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain, swollen lymph nodes, chills and fatigue.

Cases of chickenpox are being investigated in many countries in Europe as well as in the US, Canada and Australia, according to health authorities and local media reports.

The new cases have been reported in Belgium, France, Australia and Germany.

This follows infections confirmed in Italy, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom - where the first European case was reported.

Monkey pox is especially common in remote areas of Central and West Africa.

Cases of the disease outside the area are often associated with travel to the area.

Monkey pox is a rare viral infection that is usually mild and from which most people recover within a few weeks, according to the UK National Health Service.

The virus does not spread easily among people and it is said that the risk to the general public is very low.

Explains: What is Monkey Pox?

The first case of the disease in the UK was reported on 7 May. The patient recently traveled to Nigeria, where they are believed to have contracted the virus before traveling to England, UK Health.

There are now 20 approved cases in the UK, Health Minister Sajid Javid said on Friday.

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There is no specific vaccine for chickenpox, but the smallpox virus offers 85% protection because the two viruses are quite similar.

UK authorities said they had bought shares of the vaccine and began offering it to those with "higher levels of exposure" to chickenpox.

According to reports, Spanish health authorities have also purchased thousands of smallpox blouses to deal with the outbreak, according to the Spanish newspaper *El País*.

Australia's first case has been identified in a person who fell ill after traveling to the UK, the Victorian Ministry of Health said.

In North America, health authorities in the U.S. state of Massachusetts have confirmed that a person became infected after traveling to Canada recently. He was in "good" condition and "does not pose a risk to the public," officials said [1].

Bibliography

1. What is monkeypox and how do you catch it? <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-45665821>