



Monkeypox Outbreak

A Risk Communication Toolkit for Event Organizers

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Contents

1. The role you have in protecting people from monkeypox
2. The steps you can take
3. The messages you can share
4. The multimedia tools you can use
5. The community actors you can engage
6. The resources you can consult

1. The role you have in protecting people from monkeypox

This toolkit is designed to help organise events in a safe manner and can be a starting point for conversations between local and national health authorities (e.g. Ministry of Health, city department of health, national or local disease control agency, local health authorities) and event organisers, as well as civil society organisations. As an event organiser, you have an excellent and important opportunity to help people at your event learn about monkeypox and act in ways that best protect their health. This toolkit accompanies two interim advice documents by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) in the context of monkeypox. ^{1,2}

About monkeypox

An outbreak of monkeypox, a viral disease, is currently occurring in several countries in the WHO European Region. This is concerning and unusual for several reasons:

- All but one case have no travel links to areas of the world where monkeypox is commonly transmitted.
- The majority of cases have been reported in men who have sex with men (MSM). Those who have frequent sex with multiple partners are at the highest risk of becoming infected with monkeypox.
- The geographically dispersed nature of the cases across Europe and beyond suggests that some level of undetected transmission of the virus might have been occurring.
- The symptoms for most cases reported include a localised rash, particularly around the genitals and anus.

Monkeypox spreads through close physical contact with an infected person, especially skin-to-skin contact, including during sex. MSM have been disproportionately affected. However, anybody having close physical contact with someone showing symptoms of monkeypox can catch the disease. Some sexual practices (e.g. having multiple and frequent sexual contacts, including anonymous contacts) may put people more at risk of infection.

The first symptoms of the disease are aches and fever. These are commonly followed by an uncomfortable and sometimes painful rash that can appear on different parts of the body, including around the anus and genitals. In most cases, the rash clears up within a few weeks without the need for treatment. However, for some people, including pregnant women, young children, and immunocompromised individuals, monkeypox can cause severe disease requiring medical attention.

¹ [Interim advice for public health authorities on summer events during the monkeypox outbreak in Europe, 2022](#)

² [Interim advice on Risk Communication and Community Engagement during the monkeypox outbreak in Europe, 2022 \(2022\)](#)

Summer festivals: the risk and the opportunity

This summer, festivals and gatherings across Europe will bring together many hundreds of thousands of people from different countries. Most attendees are highly mobile and sexually active people, and a number of them will have intimate, skin-to-skin contact at or around these events. Some may have multiple sexual contacts, including with new and/or anonymous partners. Without action, we risk seeing a surge of monkeypox cases in Europe this summer.

Lessons from previous outbreaks spread through social and sexual networks have shown that cancelling organised gatherings is likely to be counterproductive to disease control efforts. Venue closure or event cancellation does not reduce sexual contacts but rather shifts the activities to other settings, including private parties, which are less accessible to community outreach or public health interventions.

Mass gatherings do not amplify transmission by themselves – it is the behaviour during events that matters. They may be a conducive environment for the transmission of monkeypox if they entail close, prolonged, and frequent interactions, especially sexual activity. Understanding and targeting at-risk behaviour can help reduce the spread of monkeypox.

How you can help stop the outbreak

By joining forces with local health authorities and civil society organisations, event organisers have a key role in reducing the transmission of monkeypox and protecting people's health. One way to address this is to think about the journey that the participant will go on through their interaction with your event. We are asking you to consider the following actions:

- Actively use the messages in this document to:
 - target your guests before, during and after their event;
 - engage with organisers of fringe events such as parties or club nights;
 - encourage their use in the bars, saunas, and sex-on-premises venues your guests may use in the surrounding area to inform participants about protective measures.
- Give guests information on how to contact sexual health services in your area/country.
- If any outbreak of monkeypox or a sexually transmitted infection (STI) does arise, cooperate with your local public health authority and help them contact people who may have been exposed, acting in line with European Union General Data Protection Regulation and national privacy protection regulations. If participants do not feel able to share this information, advise them to contact their close contacts directly or ask a healthcare provider to do so anonymously, in consultation with your local public health authority.

To reduce the spread of the virus and to help end this outbreak, the WHO Regional Office for Europe and ECDC are working with health authorities, event organisers, and civil society organisations across the European Region to target to those at the highest risk of infection with health information and advice.

2. The steps you can take

You can take steps to help **reduce transmission** of monkeypox among your guests by considering the following actions:

Referring to guidance from your health authorities. It's important to work with national or local public health authorities and refer to national guidance when planning your event.

Communicating risks and preventive measures

- Share health information and advice with participants before, during, and after the event using simple and visual content in relevant languages.
 - For online channels – registration forms, web, social media, newsletters and apps (including push notifications);
 - For the event – big screens, banners, posters (for instance, at eye-level above urinals or on the back of toilet doors), stage announcements;
- Use health information and advice from health authorities and international health organisations when developing messages on monkeypox and when sharing information on your channels. This toolkit includes templates you may find useful (see page 8 for how to use materials provided in this toolkit).
- Ensure your spokespeople are prepared and ready to answer questions about monkeypox, and have positive, factual information ready to share.
 - Review the resources below, which include Question and Answers and scripts for announcements before, during, and after your event. These can help spokespeople prepare their answers to questions about monkeypox.
 - When possible, access information about monkeypox and guidance on how to prevent the transmission of monkeypox from local and national health authorities or international health organisations such as WHO or ECDC.
 - If you are faced with a novel situation not covered by the information in circulation, please ask local and national health authorities or international health organisations for support to make sure messaging is accurate and consistent.
- Make health information and advice available to anyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender, but target specific groups at a higher risk of exposure, such as men who have sex with men.
- Consider continuing to provide updated health information and advice to people on how to detect monkeypox and seek medical advice on your websites, social media accounts, and apps for at least four to six weeks after the event.

Engaging community actors, business owners, and population groups

- Where relevant, engage civil society organisations to provide health information and advice through their networks; for instance, event organisers may contact civil society representatives of at-risk groups to leverage the trust they have with community members.

- Extend health information and advice to side events of gatherings (for example, night clubs, bars, and others) and business premises where sex may take place on the premises (for example, saunas and sex clubs).
- When possible, and acting in line with European Union General Data Protection Regulation and national privacy protection regulations, encourage participants to keep contact details of sexual contacts (social media handles, dating app accounts, phone numbers or email addresses) as this may help in contact tracing in the event that any sexually transmitted infection or monkeypox is diagnosed. This is critical to stop onwards spread.
- In collaboration with your public health authorities, ensure first aid workers and the medical teams at the venue are familiar with monkeypox symptoms and clinical guidance, and know what to do if they identify suspected cases.

Preventing and controlling the infection

- Provide sufficient hand-washing facilities and hand sanitisers, as per national recommendations.
 - Ensure hand-washing facilities are available to participants, that they are located across the venue area, and that information is provided to alert attendees about where they can wash or sanitise their hands.
- Distribute alcohol-based hand rub at multiple sites across the venue, particularly near toilets and in food courts, or near food trucks.
- Clean and disinfect the event premises regularly; for specifics, please review the national recommendations, and [WHO Regional Office for Europe and ECDC guidance](#).
- Allocate a private space in the event venue for attendees, volunteers, and staff who may start to show symptoms while they are attending the event. Make sure proper medical assistance is secured.

3. The messages you can share

Before the event

Key messages you can use to address event participants

- Before coming to the event, learn more about monkeypox, its symptoms, how to control transmission and what to do if you think you have monkeypox symptoms.
- Please do not trust everything you read/see online: access reliable information from local/national health authorities and reputable international health organisations for up-to-date health information and advice.
- If you have any monkeypox-related symptoms, take a break from festivals and crowded events until you've sought medical advice and have been confirmed to be well or have recovered, in particular that your rash has completely healed.
- If you think you are at increased risk of exposure to monkeypox, you can contact your healthcare provider to see what options you might have to lower the risk.

Channels you can use

- Event website, event app, and social media channels
- Civil society organisations' networks among participants
- Messages and push notifications on apps
- Text blasts (SMS text messages from a single source sent to a large group of people simultaneously)
- Email and direct messages to participants
- Interviews with trusted spokespersons featured on news websites, podcasts, and other media used by event-goers
- Pre-event webcast/Facebook Live/Grindr Live

Remember to collaborate with your **national or local public health authority** (e.g. Ministry of Health, city department of health, national or local disease control agency, local health authorities). They can advise you on how participants should access health services if they think they have monkeypox symptoms.

During the event

Key messages you can use to address event participants

- Be aware of your current health status, and if in doubt opt out from activities that could put others at risk.
- Practice safer sex:
 - having multiple and frequent sexual contacts, including with anonymous partners, may put you more at risk of infection of monkeypox and sexually transmitted infections;
 - wearing condoms does not fully prevent the risk of infection with monkeypox, as skin-to-skin contact is not avoided. However, condoms reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections;
 - remember to avoid sharing sex toys and keep them clean.
- Keep up to date with the latest health information and advice.
- Maintain good hygiene, like regular hand-cleaning.

Channels you can use

- Volunteers and staff (make sure they know where to obtain information if asked by an event participant)
- Posters at the entrance to the event
- Posters at eye-level above urinals or on back of toilet doors
- Short video messages on big screen(s) at event
- Announcements from the stage
- Event website, event app, or social media channels

- Messages on social media and apps used by people at the event

After the event

Key messages you can use to address event participants

- If you identify a new rash anywhere on your body, seek medical advice by calling your healthcare provider. If monkeypox is transmitted during sex, the rash may first appear around the genitals or the anus. Avoid having close contact with anyone until the rash has completely gone.
- If possible, self-isolate and avoid close contact with others, unless advised otherwise by your healthcare provider.
- Ask your close contacts and sexual partners if they have also had similar symptoms.
- If you notice a new rash on your partner's body, including around the genitals and anus, talk with them and advise that they visit an STI clinic or consult a healthcare provider.
- If your healthcare provider confirms you have monkeypox, follow their advice. Depending on the national recommendations, advice may include the following:
 - Self-isolate if you can, and in particular you should avoid contact with pregnant women, young children, or immunocompromised individuals. You are contagious until the last scab has fallen off.
 - Take a break from sex.
 - Communicate the list of events you have attended in the last 21 days to the health authorities so they can alert other community members who may have been infected.
 - Share the details of close and sexual contacts with health authorities or get in touch with contacts directly so they can be informed and can protect themselves and others.
- Because of current uncertainties about transmission, as a precaution wear a condom for 12 weeks even after you have fully recovered.

Channels you can use

- News items on event websites, event app, or via social media channels
- Post-event webcast/teleconference with participants
- Emails and direct messages to participants
- Push notifications via dating apps
- Interviews with trusted spokespersons featured on websites, podcasts, and media used by participants
- If possible, have an anonymous (i.e. no email or personal information required) form on your website where people can tell you that they have tested positive for monkeypox as well as which events they attended on which day, so that you can use this to alert other event participants.

- Remember to collaborate with your **local public health authority** (e.g. Ministry of Health, city departments of health, national or local disease control agency). They can advise you on how participants should access health services if they think they have monkeypox or a sexually transmitted infection.

[This short video](#) by Steve Taylor (Board member [@EuroPride](#), Head of Secretariat [@CopenhagenPride](#)) explains how event organisers can help amplify public health messaging on [#monkeypox](#).

a. Questions and Answers on monkeypox

This section details the key Questions and Answers that can be used during the proposed actions in the preceding section.

1. What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a virus that causes a disease with the same name. Its incubation period is between 5 and 21 days. Monkeypox is often self-limiting, meaning symptoms usually go away within two to four weeks without treatment.

2. What are the symptoms I should look out for?

Symptoms can be mild to severe. They include:

- Rash on face, hands, feet, eyes, in mouth, inside or around the anus, and/or on and around the genitals. May appear with blisters
- inflammation and pain in rectum
- fever
- swollen lymph nodes
- headaches
- muscle aches
- low energy

Symptoms usually begin with a fever, muscle aches, backache, fatigue and then progress to lesions, a rash, and painful lymph nodes. Lesions and rashes can start on the hands, neck, and face and may then spread to the rest of the body. The rash is usually painful and uncomfortable.

In this latest outbreak, most – but not all – cases have been detected in gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, with lesions and rashes appearing on or around the genitals, on or around the anus, or in the mouth.

However, it is important to emphasise that anyone can catch monkeypox if they have close physical contact with an infectious person, regardless of their sexual orientation. People more at risk of exposure to monkeypox include household members and sexual partners of cases, commercial sex workers, and health workers. It is wrong to stigmatise anyone for having monkeypox.

3. How is monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox is not normally easily spread between people. To catch monkeypox you need to have prolonged close contact with someone who already has monkeypox, or with their contaminated belongings. Having direct skin-to-skin contact with the rash or lesions of someone with monkeypox is particularly risky. Our advice is to, among other things:

- Practice safer sex, including limiting the number of sexual partners. Wearing condoms can reduce but not fully eliminate the risk of infection with monkeypox.
- Keep your hands clean, using soap and water, or alcohol-based sanitiser.

4. What can I do if I suspect I have monkeypox?

If you have any monkeypox-related symptoms, follow your health provider and health authorities' guidance, including:

- Avoid large gatherings, parties, festivals, and crowded events.
- Take a break from having sex until you've sought medical advice and have been confirmed to be well/recovered.
- Report your symptoms to an STI clinic or other health provider.
- Get tested for monkeypox, as advised.

5. What should I do if I am confirmed with monkeypox?

- Follow your health provider and health authorities' guidance, including:
 - Isolate until your symptoms disappear (when the last scab has fallen off and a layer of skin has grown over the lesion).
 - Take a break from sex. Because of uncertainty about transmission, as a precaution wear a condom during sexual activities for 12 weeks after the lesions have healed.
 - Avoid contact with people more vulnerable to severe disease from monkeypox (pregnant women, young children, immunocompromised people).
 - Share your contacts with health authorities so they can be informed and can protect themselves and others. In line with your national regulations, if you do not feel able to share this information, consider contacting close contacts yourself or ask a healthcare provider to do so anonymously.

Resources:

(Public health advice on the recent outbreak of monkeypox in the WHO European Region is available [here](#) and [here](#))

Public health advice on the recent outbreak of monkeypox in the EU/EEUA by ECDC, including guidance for health authorities, event organisers, and the public, as well as epidemiological updates, can be found [here](#).

4. Multimedia tools to use

Materials listed below are both for direct sharing as they are or for rebranding. If you rebrand materials with your own logo, please remove any current logos or contact us. Co-branding documents with the WHO logo or ECDC and yours is **not authorised**. Posters, social media tiles and the information leaflet are provided in an editable format, and you can adjust language to fit the needs of your audience when rebranding with your logo. Resharing WHO/ECDC content on your channels is appreciated and welcome. We kindly ask that you share with us the links to where/how the material was used by contacting Fryn@who.int.

Date available	Product	Description	How/where to use
	Social media graphic/tiles	Concise, eye-catching tiles containing key messages and link to more information.	Social media channels (e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram).
	Laminated Posters – translated into ENG, RUS.	Concise, eye-catching tiles containing key messages and QR code that links to more information.	Back of toilet doors, above urinals (one poster per urinal if possible), at entrance to venues, first aid centres.
20.6.2022	Photos of monkey rash lesions	A selection of images are available here . Please credit © UK Health Security Agency Kindly email euphotos@who.int if you use them.	Social media channels (e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram).
	Video clips from Press conference held on 15 June by Dr Hans Kluge and Andrea Ammon	Short video clip from joint press conference urging community engagement to curb transmission.	Web content, pop-ups, social media, video screens at events, media. Please contact Tylers@who.int and palumbol@who.int
15.6.2022	Video clip from Steve Taylor	Short video explainer by Steve Taylor (Board member @EuroPride , Head of Secretariat @CopenhagenPride On how event organisers help amplify public health messaging on #monkeypox?	Web content, pop-ups, social media, video screens at events, media. See link here .

	Video clips from social media live event on monkeypox	Short video featuring up-to-date information on monkeypox from public health and civil society organisations.	Web content, pop-ups, social media, video screens at events, media. Please contact Tylers@who.int and palumbol@who.int .
	Stage announcement script	Short introductory script that helps hosts/presenters, etc. give accurate, well-worded and up-to-date information and advice on monkeypox, and signposts for further information.	For use by hosts and presenters speaking between acts – to draw attention to monkeypox messaging/introduce video message. Please contact Tylers@who.int and palumbol@who.int .
	Animation	10-15 seconds long animation containing key messages and signposting for the big screen.	Animation can be played in intervals between performances on video screens above stages. Please contact Tylers@who.int and palumbol@who.int
	Video clips from participants at events	First-person testimonies about actions participants can take to have fun and stay safe at big gatherings.	Social media, video screens during intervals at events, web content, pop-ups, media. Please contact Tylers@who.int and palumbol@who.int
	QR codes on monkeypox from WHO and ECDC	Link to detailed health information and advice.	For addition to posters, social media, take-home products/leaflets, etc.
	Dating APP script	Key message pop-up, with link to monkeypox information and advice/contacts of sexual health providers.	MSM dating apps (GRINDR, Scruff, Chappy, Planet Romeo, Tinder, Feeld, etc.)

	Video explainer from an event organiser- a 'how-to' guide on risk communication about monkeypox at mass gatherings.	Video explanation of steps needed to inform people, including at-risk groups, about monkeypox at a festival/large event, showing location of posters, explaining how advice was developed with WHO/community groups, shots of follow-up emails, etc. (approximately two minutes.)	Web content, social media, for email distribution, media.
	Gadgets	Consider creating gadgets with a QR code that participants will take home after the event.	Link to public health advice

5. Community actors to engage

Community engagement approaches can maximise outreach to and minimise stigmatization of MSM.

Various organisations exist at the regional, national, sub-national, and local levels working on health for LGBTQIA+, including activist groups and community testing organisations (i.e., checkpoints). These could be contacted, informed, and asked to engage in outreach activities with their members, users and networks about health information and advice on monkeypox and to hear their perceptions and concerns.

Event organisers can discuss with local health authorities how contact tracing can be organised in a timely, discreet, and confidential manner (e.g. through partner notification or conventional contact tracing, along the lines of national recommendations). If necessary, collaborate with local organisations that are experienced in doing outreach and are trusted by communities.

Tips on mapping Civil Society Organisations & other community actors

As community engagement and outreach on topics regarding sexual practices can be sensitive, when possible engaging trusted community groups is advisable. You may have connections with local businesses developed over the years and might strengthen your outreach through partners, event vendors, and venues.

The following questions can help you identify relevant local businesses and community actors and encourage them to post information and advice on their social media, website, and other communication platforms. Remember to partner with your local public health authority (e.g. Ministry of Health, city departments of health, national or local disease control agency) to ensure accuracy and consistency of actions and messaging.

1. Are there Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that represent or work with gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men?
 - If yes, these CSOs may be able to help you target information and advice specifically at men who have sex with men.
2. Are there CSOs that work with youth and young people on sexual health issues?
 - If yes, these CSOs may be able to help you target sexually active young people.
3. Which large parties, saunas, sex-on premise venues, side events, bars and/or nightclubs are participants in your event most likely to visit before or after it?
 - Approach the owners/hosts of these venues to enlist their help sharing public health information.

6. Resources to consult

- [Interim advice for public health authorities on summer events during the monkeypox outbreak in Europe, 2022](#)
- [Interim advice on Risk Communication and Community Engagement during the monkeypox outbreak in Europe, 2022 \(2022\)](#)
- WHO Regional Office for Europe regular updates on monkeypox: <https://www.who.int/europe/emergencies/situations/monkeypox>
- ECDC Monkeypox page regular epidemiological updates, guidance, and publications on monkeypox: www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/monkeypox-outbreak
- NGOs PrEPster and The Love Tank provide regular updates on monkeypox (including information for venues and event promoters): Everything we know about monkeypox so far: www.queerhealth.info/monkeypox
- Public health advice on the recent outbreak of monkeypox in the WHO European Region. 24 May 2022. [Public health advice on the recent outbreak of monkeypox in the WHO European Region. 24 May 2022](#)
- Monkeypox Q&A [English](#), [Русский](#), [Français](#) (20 May 2022)
- ECDC monkeypox Q&A <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/monkeypox/questions-and-answers>
- WHO factsheet on monkeypox, publishing date, 19 May 2022: <http://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/monkeypox>
- WHO Surveillance. Case investigation and contact tracing for Monkeypox: Interim guidance, 22 May 2022. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-MONKEYPOX-surveillance-2022.1>
- Laboratory testing for the monkeypox virus: interim guidance. [English](#), [Русский](#) (23 May 2022)
- [Clinical management and infection prevention and control for monkeypox: Interim rapid response guidance, 10 June 2022](#)
- [WHO Monkeypox outbreak: update and advice for health workers, 26 May 2022.](#)