

# Supporting Students During the Current MPOX Outbreak

**Shelley Hickey, NP**  
(she, her, hers)

Student Health Clinic  
University of Maine Farmington

With Special Credit to:  
Blake Flaugher, MPH CHES  
(he, him, his)

Student Health & Counseling Services  
University of California, Davis



# MPOX (monkeypox virus) Basics

- Virus identified in 1958 that is related to the smallpox virus – though **MPOX is less severe** than smallpox
- Can cause **some or all** of the following symptoms: fever, low energy, body aches, swollen lymph nodes, rashes, sores
  - Most people with MPOX will get **rashes and sores**
- MPOX is usually **mild and self-limiting** (lasts 2-4 weeks). People diagnosed with MPOX do not have MPOX their entire lives.
- There are vaccines and treatments available.

# MPOX Can Be Spread Through...

- Direct **skin-to-skin contact with the sores or scabs** of people with MPOX
- Direct **contact with body fluids of people with MPOX**, such as drainage from skin sores or saliva that was in contact with mouth sores
- **Contact with the respiratory secretions of people with MPOX**, such as saliva, during prolonged, face-to-face contact or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex
- Touching items (**such as bedding towels, clothing, cups and utensils**) that previously touched the sores or body fluids of people with MPOX

# To Date, There Has Been No Evidence That MPOX Is Spread By...

- Attending an outdoor event with fully clothed people
- Trying on clothes or shoes at a store
- Traveling in an airport, on a plane or on other public transit
- Swimming in a pool or body of water
- Casual contact with other people

# There Are Many Ways to Prevent MPOX

- Always **talking to your sexual partner(s)** about any recent illness and being aware of new or unexplained **sores or rashes** on your body or your partner's body, including on the genitals and anus
- Avoiding close contact, including **hugging, kissing, cuddling and sexual activity** with people with symptoms like sores or rashes
- Not sharing materials (**bedding, towels, clothing, utensils, cups**) with someone who has symptoms
- **Washing your hands often** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) (like a mask, gown, and gloves) when caring for others with symptoms
- Avoiding contact with infected animals

# Scientists Are Still Researching...

- If MPOX can be spread when someone has no symptoms
- How often MPOX is spread through respiratory secretions, or when a person with MPOX symptoms might be more likely to spread the virus through respiratory secretions.
- Whether MPOX can be spread through semen, vaginal fluids, urine, or feces.

## There are Vaccines Available to Those Who Are Eligible

- In Maine, Monkeypox vaccine is available to individuals of all ages who meet certain criteria.

- MPOX Vaccine Locator

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/zoonotic/monkeypox.shtml#vaccine>

# What Should You Do If You Were Exposed or Are Experiencing Symptoms?

- First, know that you are still awesome and did not do anything wrong!
- Contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible and let them know
- If you need help finding a local provider, you can:
  - Contact the Student Health Clinic: [UMF.HealthClinic@maine.edu](mailto:UMF.HealthClinic@maine.edu)
  - Contact Franklin Memorial Hospital Emergency Department:  
<https://www.mainehealth.org/franklin-community-health-network/services/emergency-department>
  - Contact a local Convenient Care Facility:  
<https://www.solvehealth.com/me/c/farmington-me-urgent-care>
- If you are diagnosed with MPOX, have a rash and do not require hospitalization, isolate at home until your rash is **fully** resolved, scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed.



# MPOX and COVID-19: Totally Different!

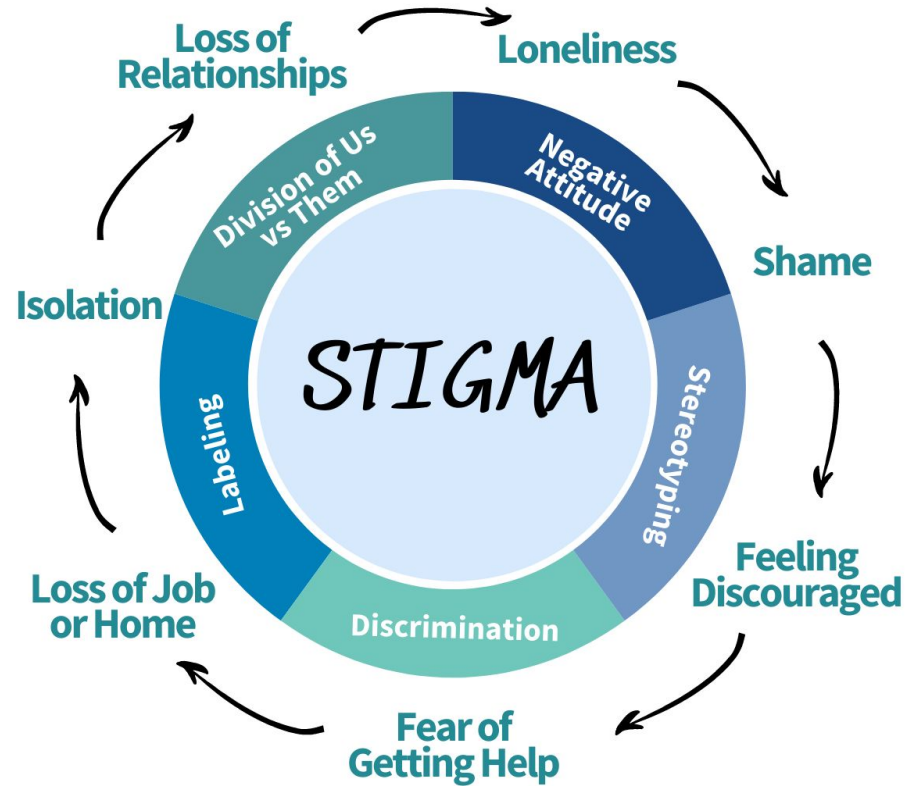
- MPOX is **not nearly as widespread or infectious** as the virus that causes COVID-19, and they are very different
- While we learn more about the current MPOX outbreak, continue some basic practices that we already know help to keep us healthy
  - Wash your hands often
  - Stay home and seek care if you feel sick or notice a new rash
  - Wear a mask around others when you feel sick
  - Talk to any sexual partners about symptoms beforehand
  - Practice safer sex

# Anyone Can Get MPOX

- Viruses **do not infect people based on who they are** (race, sexual orientation, gender identity etc)
- As with any other infectious disease, MPOX has **not been affecting every community in the same way**
- Systems of oppression such as **racism, heterosexism, and cissexism** prevent access to information and resources (such as vaccination, testing and treatment)
- Being a part of any community that is most affected **does not mean that someone is contagious or has MPOX**

# What Is Stigma?

- a **mark of disgrace** associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person (Oxford English Dictionary)
- Stigma makes people **less likely** to seek support and care
- Stigma creates **poor mental and physical health**



# Supporting Residents and Reducing Stigma

- Being diagnosed with MPOX **does not mean** someone is “dirty,” immoral, irresponsible, or unworthy of being treated with dignity and respect.
- Being diagnosed with MPOX **does not indicate** a person’s sexual orientation.
- Being diagnosed with MPOX **does not indicate** that it was acquired from sexual contact.

# Supporting Residents and Reducing Stigma

- Isolation time for MPOX **can be 2-4+ weeks** – much longer than COVID
  - This can obviously take a toll on a resident’s mental health
- Even if you know that someone is in isolation for MPOX, it is important to **protect that person’s privacy** if you are asked about it
- You **cannot** “report” suspected students with MPOX to the Student Health Clinic, nor compel someone to receive care
- You **can** help ensure that residents have accurate info about MPOX and what the available resources are
- There is **no need to panic!**

# If a Resident Tells You They Were Diagnosed with MPOX

- **Acknowledge.** Thank them for trusting you with their private health information.
- **Ask.** If appropriate, ask if there's anything that you can do to help them. One reason they may have chosen to disclose their status to you is that they need an ally or advocate, or they may need help with a particular issue or challenge.
- **Reassure.** Let the person know, through your words or actions, that having MPOX does not change your relationship and that you will keep this information private.
- **Learn.** Educate yourself about MPOX, and do not make assumptions about how they acquired it.
- **Link them to resources.** Let them know there is medical and mental health support available.

# Helpful Resources

Maine Center for Disease Control:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/zoonotic/monkeypox.shtml>

MPOX Resources from American College Health Association:

[Acha.org](https://www.acha.org)

University of Maine System:

<https://www.maine.edu/together/community-guidance/mpox-faqs/>

UMF Student Health Clinic:

[UMF.HealthClinic@maine.edu](mailto:UMF.HealthClinic@maine.edu) ~ <https://www.umf.maine.edu/studenthealth/>

UMF Mental Health & Counseling Services:

<https://www.umf.maine.edu/counseling/> ~ [umfcounseling@maine.edu](mailto:umfcounseling@maine.edu)