

HALTON REGION PUBLIC HEALTH • Office of the Medical Officer of Health

TEL: 905-825-6000 • TOLL FREE: 1-866-442-5866 • FAX: 905-825-1444

TO: Halton Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Emergency Departments

FROM: Dr. Joanna Oda, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: December 19, 2023

RE: Monkeypox Virus Detected in Neighbouring Health Unit's Wastewater

QUICK FACTS

- Monkeypox virus has been detected in wastewater samples of the [City of Hamilton](#).
- While the mpox outbreak has been declared over, the detection of monkeypox virus in wastewater may indicate undiagnosed, sporadic mpox cases.
- The last case of mpox reported to Halton Region Public Health was in October 2022.
- In Ontario, there have been 31 mpox cases reported between January 1 and November 13, 2023, of which 80.6% were reported by Toronto Public Health.

KEY MESSAGES FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- Continue to consider mpox as a differential diagnosis in individuals presenting with compatible clinical illness.
- Recommend Imvamune® vaccine as pre-exposure prophylaxis to individuals who meet [Ontario's current eligibility criteria](#). Imvamune® is offered as a two-dose primary series, with at least 28 days between first and second doses.
- If a patient has symptoms of mpox, they should immediately self-isolate. If contact with others is necessary (e.g., seeking health care), the patient should wear a high-quality medical mask and cover all lesions.
- Continue to follow infection control practices as per [Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Mpox in Health Care Settings](#).

General Mpox Information

- Mpox is a disease caused by the monkeypox virus, which is usually mild and self-limiting, however severe illness can occur.
- Mpox can spread from person-to-person by close contact with respiratory secretions, contact with skin lesions or bodily fluids, contact with materials contaminated with the virus or from mother to fetus.

Signs and Symptoms

- The incubation period can range from 5 to 21 days and symptoms typically last 2 to 4 weeks.
- The rash may be itchy or painful, initially presenting as a flat sore, developing into a blister, and may spread throughout the body including the oral mucosa, conjunctiva, hands, feet, genital and/or peri-anal area.
- General accompanying symptoms include fever/chills, headache, swollen lymph nodes, fatigue, back, joint and muscle pain.

Please report all suspected/confirmed cases of [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) to Public Health immediately by calling 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866.

PLEASE POST IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS AND PHYSICIAN LOUNGES

IF YOU CAN'T ACCESS HYPERLINKS, PLEASE SIGN UP FOR ELECTRONIC UPDATES BY EMAILING DOCTORS@HALTON.CA

Testing

- For detailed information on testing, specimen collection and specimen transport, see [Public Health Ontario's Test Information Index – Monkeypox virus](#).
- Skin lesions have a higher viral load, making swabs or skin lesion material more sensitive.
- Nasopharyngeal/throat swabs and blood specimens are **not** recommended in patients who have skin lesions that can be swabbed or have skin lesion material that can be submitted for testing (e.g., scab).
- For patients who do not have a skin rash (e.g., a close contact of a case with febrile illness but no rash) or the skin cannot be reliably swabbed (e.g., macular or papular rash only), blood should always be submitted along with a nasopharyngeal swab or throat swab.
- Anal or rectal swabs are recommended for patients with lesions in these locations, or symptoms of involvement (e.g., rectal pain).

Imvamune® Vaccine

- [Halton Region Public Health Sexual Health Clinics](#) offer Imvamune® vaccine for pre-exposure vaccination by appointment only to individuals who meet [Ontario's current eligibility criteria](#). Eligible individuals can call 311 to book an appointment; no OHIP card or ID is required.
- If a patient has had a [high or intermediate risk exposure to mpox](#), the community health care provider should contact 311 to request Imvamune® vaccine for post-exposure vaccination to be administered in the health care provider's office. The provision of Imvamune® vaccine as post-exposure vaccination for high-risk contacts requires an assessment of the risk of exposure by Halton Region Public Health.
- Individuals who are household and/or sexual contacts of someone who meets pre-exposure vaccination eligibility AND are [moderately to severely immunocompromised](#) are also eligible to receive 2 doses of Imvamune® at least 28 days apart. A [completed referral form](#) from their health care provider must be presented at their vaccine appointment.
- Individuals who are eligible for pre-exposure vaccination and post-exposure vaccination who previously received an older generation replicating smallpox vaccine can be re-vaccinated. For individuals with a history of receiving 1 dose of a smallpox vaccine, only a single dose of Imvamune® is recommended.

Reporting Requirements

- Under the authority of the [Health Protection and Promotion Act \(HPPA\)](#) and [Regulation 569](#), all suspect, confirmed cases or death caused by or contributing to diseases of public health significance, including mpox are to be reported to the local Medical Officer of Health by calling 905-825-6000 ext. 7341 during regular business hours and 311 after hours.
- Complete page 1 of the [Ontario Mpox Investigation Tool](#) and fax to Halton Region Public Health at 905-825-8797.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Public Health Ontario Mpox Resources](#)
- [Ministry of Health Recommendations for the management of cases and contacts of mpox in Ontario](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Mpox](#)
- [World Health Organization Fact Sheet: Mpox](#)