Dear Provider,

The monkeypox outbreak in the United States continues to grow, with over 60 cases in 18 states reported. The Howard County Health Department is here to assist you with monkeypox evaluation, diagnosis, testing and infection prevention guidance.

Anyone can acquire monkeypox; however, most of the current outbreak cases have a history of sexual contact and identify as gay, bisexual, or a man who has sex with men. Close contact (including sustained skin-to-skin) or contact with contaminated fomites are the major risk factors associated with transmission of monkeypox.

Most cases in the United States have a different presentation compared to the classic monkeypox prodrome and rash. In some people, the prodrome has been absent, or occurred after the rash appeared. While all cases have experienced the rash, it has typically appeared in mucosal areas, genital, perianal or oral cavity, and is sometimes localized. In addition, the lesions have been noted to exist in different stages of progression at the same body site. This contrasts with classic monkeypox, which typically appears on the face or oral cavity, then spreads with concentration on the face and extremities, with lesions in the same stage within an anatomical area.

Here are some clinical tips when evaluating a person with symptoms:

- Patients with rashes initially considered characteristic of more common infections (e.g., varicella zoster or sexually transmitted infections) should be carefully evaluated for a characteristic monkeypox rash and submission of specimens of lesions should be considered, especially if the person has epidemiologic risk factors for monkeypox infection.
- Evaluate any individual presenting with perianal or genital ulcers, diffuse rash, or proctitis syndrome for STIs per the 2021 CDC STI Treatment Guidelines. Testing for STIs should be performed. The diagnosis of an STI does not exclude monkeypox as a concurrent infection may be present. The clinical presentation of monkeypox may be similar to some STIs, such as syphilis, herpes, lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV), or other etiologies of proctitis.
- Medical providers should perform a thorough skin and mucosal (e.g., anal, vaginal, oral) examination for the characteristic vesiculo-pustular rash of monkeypox; this allows for detection of lesions the patient may not have been previously aware of.
- Medical providers should use appropriate infection prevention measures when collecting specimens for monkeypox evaluation. Information on infection prevention in healthcare settings is provided on the CDC website.
- Patients should be given guidance for isolation and home infection prevention measures, which can be found on the CDC website.

Please contact our Surveillance and Response Program by phone (410-313-1412) immediately to report a suspected case of monkeypox. If the patient needs to be tested based
on clinical presentation and epidemiologic risk factors, we will contact the state health department for approval to submit a specimen. After approval, we will provide you with guidance about specimen collection and coordinate transport to the state lab. For additional information about monkeypox, send an email to hchdinfection@howardcountymd.gov and visit our website HCHD Monkeypox Resources.

Sincerely,

Kelly Russo, MD, MPH
Medical Director
Howard County Health Department