

July 8, 2022

Guidance for Testing and Specimen Collection for Suspected Cases of Monkeypox

Summary

As of July 7th, 700 cases of monkeypox have been diagnosed in the United States with three of the cases in Ohio. As a result of increased awareness of the national monkeypox outbreak, the Delaware Public Health District (DPHD) has received several questions regarding the procedures surrounding testing patients. In accordance with recent CDC guidelines, DPHD has issued the following health alert to offer guidance regarding testing and specimen submission in patients suspected of monkeypox.

Background

Monkeypox is a disease caused by monkeypox virus. It is a viral zoonotic disease, meaning that it can spread from animals to people. It can also spread when a person has contact with a person or materials (e.g., bedding, towels) that are contaminated with the virus. Monkeypox can spread through:

- Direct contact with monkeypox lesions on a person's skin
- Direct contact with contaminated objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding or towels), and surfaces that have been in contact with someone with monkeypox
- Contact with respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, fluid from lesions, and sometimes tears from a person with monkeypox

Monkeypox can also be spread during intimate contact including:

- Oral, anal, and vaginal sex, or touching the genitals or anus of a person with monkeypox
- Hugging, massaging, kissing or talking closely
- Touching fabrics, shared surfaces, and objects (such as bedding, towels, and sex toys)

People with monkeypox may first develop symptoms including a flu-like illness with fever, headache, muscle aches, exhaustion, and enlarged lymph nodes. A few days later, a characteristic rash occurs. In recent cases, patients have developed localized rashes in the genital and perianal regions without prior flu-like symptoms. Monkeypox symptoms can sometimes be confused with other illnesses that present with a similar rash, such as syphilis, herpes simplex virus, and chicken pox (varicella zoster virus).

Recommendations on WHO to test

Providers should obtain specimen swabs if the following criteria are met:

- The patient presents with a classic monkeypox rash *OR*
- The patient presents with a rash that *could be* consistent with monkeypox *and* the person has one or more of the following epidemiologic risk factors:
 - Contact with someone who was diagnosed with monkeypox
 - Contact with someone with a similar appearing rash
 - Close or intimate contact with people who belong to a social network that is experiencing monkeypox activity. (For example, men who have sex with men who meet partners through an online website, digital app or social event.)
 - History of recent international travel.

Please note monkeypox can infect and spread to anyone, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. Also note that several recent monkeypox cases have had co-infection with common sexually transmitted diseases.

Recommendations on HOW to test

Scenario: A 26 year old male presents to a clinic with complaints of a rash beginning in the perineal area and extending to the left thigh. After evaluation, the provider suspects that this may be a case of monkeypox based on clinical presentation of the rash as well as epidemiologic information provided by the patient. The provider determines to collect samples to send to the Ohio Department of Health Laboratory for testing.

Please note that specimen collection must be performed according to the following information, or the specimen **will not** be accepted for testing by the Ohio Department of Health Laboratory (ODHL).

Four (4) swabs must be collected from two (2) separate sites for preliminary and confirmatory testing as follows:

- Samples should be collected using separate sterile dry polyester, Dacron, or Rayon swabs and each swab placed in its own dry sterile container.
- The lesion sampled should be vigorously swabbed or brushed to obtain a proper specimen.
- Collect two swabs from a single site (duplicate specimen from same site). Each swab should be labeled.
- Then collect two additional swabs from a separate site, at a different location on the body.

For the example scenario: *The clinician swabs a lesion in the perineal area with two separate swabs and places them in separate dry sterile containers labeled Perineal #1 and Perineal #2. The clinician also labels each specimen with the patient's name, date of birth and medical ID number. The clinician then collects two swabs from a lesion on the left thigh and labels them Left Thigh #1 and Left Thigh #2 and includes patient identifiers. This would provide 4 separate sterile containers each with a specimen swab.*

Specimens should be stored frozen (recommended temperature is -20°C or lower) within one hour of collection. Frozen specimens must be delivered to the Ohio Department of Health Laboratory within 10 days.

If specimens cannot be frozen, they can be refrigerated (2 - 8°C) but must be delivered to the Ohio Department of Health Laboratory within 6 days.

Reporting to Delaware Public Health District

Immediately after collecting a specimen, call the Delaware Public Health District to facilitate transport of the specimen to the Ohio Department of Health Laboratory for testing.

Contact the Disease Control and Response Team during business hours by calling (740) 368-1700 or during after-hours by calling the emergency on call number (740) 815-6518.

Currently, there are no costs with transportation or testing of specimens submitted to DPHD.

References

CDC Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity Call, Wednesday June 29, 2022

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/clinicians/clinical-recognition.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/clinicians/treatment.html>

CDC MMWR June 3, 2022

CDC Health Alert Network Health Advisory