



# Guidance for Monkeypox Specimen Collection & Testing

Updated July 26, 2022

## Patient Placement & Specimen Collection

A patient with suspected monkeypox infection should be placed in a single-person room; special air handling is not required. The door should be kept closed (if safe to do so). In an outpatient setting, the patient should use well-fitting source control (e.g., medical mask) and have any exposed skin lesions covered with a sheet or gown when not being examined.

Most laboratories will not collect specimens for monkeypox testing. Providers who would like to order monkeypox testing should follow the specimen collection and handling directions below. Specimens may be sent to a commercial laboratory (e.g., Quest, LabCorp, Aegis, Mayo) or to the Monterey County Health Department's Public Health Laboratory. Directions for specimen collection may vary by laboratory but are generally as follows:

- Collect specimens while wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE, see below).
- Use dry swabs such as sterile nylon, polyester, or Dacron swabs with plastic or aluminum shafts to collect specimens of lesions.
- Vigorously swab or brush lesion with **two separate sterile dry swabs**.
- Break off swabs into separate 1.5- or 2-mL screw-capped tubes with O-ring or place each entire swab in a separate empty sterile container.
  - Container may be **dry or contain viral transport media (VTM)**. No other type of transport medium is acceptable.
- Up to 3 different lesions should be sampled, preferably from different body sites. (This would result in 6 swabs total.)
- Please mark/label each set of 2 swabs with an identical number so they are easy to distinguish from separate lesion collections (e.g., Lesion A Swab #1 from Left Thigh, Lesion A Swab #2 from Left Thigh, Lesion B Swab #1 from Left Thigh, Lesion B Swab #2 from Left Thigh).
- Lesion crusts or scabs may be submitted **dry** in separate sterile containers.
- Store in refrigerator at 4°C if transferring to a laboratory within 24 to 72 hours; otherwise, store in freezer at -20°C to -80°C.
- Complete laboratory requisition forms, filling out all requested information, and submit with specimen.

## Healthcare Worker Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Waste Management

Standard Precautions should be applied for all patient care, including for patients with suspected monkeypox. PPE used by healthcare personnel who enter the patient's room should include:

- Gown
- Gloves
- Eye protection (i.e., goggles or a face shield that covers the front and sides of the face)



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- NIOSH-approved particulate respirator equipped with N95 filters or higher

The Department of Transportation indicates that waste contaminated with the West African clade of monkeypox virus should be managed as UN3291 Regulated Medical Waste in the same manner as other potentially infectious medical waste (e.g. soiled dressings, contaminated sharps).

Standard cleaning and disinfection procedures should be performed using an EPA-registered hospital-grade disinfectant with an emerging viral pathogen claim:

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/disinfectants-emerging-viral-pathogens-evps-list-g>.

Soiled laundry (e.g., bedding, towels, personal clothing) should be handled in accordance with standard practices, avoiding contact with lesion material that may be present on the laundry: <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/guidelines/environmental-guidelines-P.pdf>.

## Patient Instructions

- When there is a high degree of suspicion for monkeypox, please instruct patients to isolate at home until test results are available.
- Patients should cover lesions if they must have contact with others and abstain from sexual/close intimate contact while results are pending.
- Average turnaround time for results is currently 2 to 3 business days.
- Also, please inform patients they will be contacted by the Monterey County Health Department.

## Health Department Reporting

Please report all suspected and confirmed monkeypox cases by phone to the Monterey County Health Department's Communicable Disease Unit within 1 day:

- During normal business hours: 831-755-4521.
- Outside of normal business hours: 831-755-5100 and ask for the Hazardous Materials Team; they will connect you with on-call public health staff.

## Additional Resources

- Monterey County Health Department Communicable Disease Unit: 831-755-4521.
- Monterey County Public Health Laboratory: 831-755-4516.
- CDPH Healthcare Provider Health Advisory: Managing Monkeypox Virus Infection in California, updated June 23, 2022:  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Health-Advisory-Monkeypox-Virus-6-23-22.aspx>
- CDC Monkeypox Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html>