



Learn more about monkeypox as we record first confirmed case in SA

South Africa has recorded its first case of monkeypox today, 23 June 2022. The Minister of Health Dr. Joe Phaahla explained that he received a report from the National Health Laboratory Services' CEO that they have confirmed through laboratory tests the first case of monkeypox in South Africa. South Africa's monkeypox patient zero is a 30-year-old man from Johannesburg.

The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) has prepared an information sheet to better understand monkeypox, the symptoms to treatment.

What you need to know

The monkeypox virus causes symptoms similar to smallpox, but less severe. Smallpox was eradicated in 1980 through the administration of a vaccine. The smallpox vaccine has proved to be effective in combatting monkeypox as well.

The monkeypox virus is endemic to Central and West Africa in two distinct clades: The West Africa and the Congo Basin clades. Like the coronavirus, the monkeypox virus is transmitted from animals to humans. Human-to-human transmission is limited though. It can be transmitted via contact with bodily fluids, skin lesions or internal mucosal surfaces such as the mouth or throat, respiratory droplets, and contaminated objects.

The best and most reliable method of detection is the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, and the best specimens are sourced from rash, fluids or crusts. Antigen and antibody detection are not accurate.

Since 15 June 2022, 2 103 laboratory confirmed cases of monkeypox, one probable case, and one death have been reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) from 42 countries. Endemic countries include Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, DRC, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and South Sudan. To date all cases have been identified as being infected by the West African Clade.

Cases have been identified in South Africa, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK, and the USA.

Information suggests that this is common among homosexual men and who seek treatment and care at healthcare institutions. Furthermore, those at risk are individuals who have had physical contact with someone with monkeypox.

Symptoms include:

- Skin rash
- Headache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Muscle and body pains
- Back pain
- Weakness

Any patient with suspected symptoms should be investigated, and if confirmed, isolated until such time that their lesions have crusted, scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed.

Treatment for Monkeypox

According to the National Institute Communicable Diseases (NICD), this type of infection does not require specific treatment as the disease does resolve on its own. Currently in South Africa, there is no specific vaccine registered for monkeypox.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) further explain that there are no specific treatments for the Monkeypox infection, but outbreaks can be controlled. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved tecovirimat (TPOXX) and brincidofovir (TEMBEXA) for the treatment of smallpox; however, these have not been registered in South Africa.

Transmissible, but not deadly

It is important to note that most human cases of Monkeypox resolve within 2-3 weeks of being infected without side-effects. Also, an infected person is infectious at the start of the rash/lesions through the stage when scabs form. However, when these scabs fall off, the person is no longer contagious.

For more information, visit these sites:

- <https://www.nicd.ac.za/monkeypox-frequently-asked-questions/>
- <https://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/monkeypox/>
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/monkeypox>