

How Much Do You Know About the Monkeypox Virus?

Another virus that has been in the spotlight in recent times, and even at the time of writing this article is the monkeypox virus. And just like other viruses, serves as a great challenge to the medical field.

In this article we would look at the monkeypox virus in a way that will clear any fallacies that have been made about the virus, and the disease it causes.

Background and History.

The monkeypox disease is a rare zoonotic disease, which is infectious like other virus-caused diseases. The monkeypox virus, which causes the disease, falls under the genus of *orthopoxvirus* (a genus that also houses viruses, which causes smallpox and cowpox), and in the family of *poxviridae*.

The disease was first discovered in 1958 among a colony of monkeys, and dating down to 1970, the first human victim of the virus was discovered in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), during an intensive effort to clear out smallpox in the country.

After 1970, more human victims of the virus were discovered in Central and western Africa, and even in other continents.

Method of Transmission

These can be through infected animals, persons, or materials.

1. Through Animals

When infected animals scratch or bite a person, there is a risk of Transmission. Also when one uses products from infected animals, he or she can contact the virus.

Transmission through animals is still under research as of now, because it is quite unclear which animals harbor the virus naturally though rodents in Africa are suspects of the "viral-crime".

2. Person to Person.

Coming in contact with body fluids, secretions from respiration, sores, mother to child transmission through the placenta, during sex and sexual foreplay. There is still however, no clear evidence that it is transmitted directly through semen or vaginal fluid.

3. Through Infected Materials .

Materials like clothing, bedsheets, toothbrush, bathing sponge, and so on, that have come in contact with infected sores or body fluids can serve as a medium of the disease transfer.

How Deadly Is This Virus?

Lucky for us, the monkeypox disease has a low mortality ratio, leading to the death of about 2 to 8 percent of its victims. Compared to smallpox, it is less deadly, and it resolves on its own in about 2 weeks or even 1 month.

What Symptoms and Signs Indicate the Possibility of Monkeypox?

The symptoms of monkeypox may initially be confused with that of smallpox, but they can be differentiated as you will see below.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO). The disease can be seen in two sequential phases.

1. The invasion phase.
2. The skin eruption phase.

1. The Invasion Phase.

This lasts for about five days, and it is coupled with fever, muscle pains, back pains, swelling of lymph nodes /lymphadenopathy (which helps differentiate monkeypox from other initially suspected diseases like smallpox or chickenpox), weakness, and severe headache.

2. The Skin Eruption Phase.

This phase starts about 2 days after the fever kicks-off. Rashes begin to appear on the skin. A greater percentage of the rashes is seen on the face, palm and feet, while relatively fewer rashes are seen around the genitals and conjunctivae.

Complications of the monkeypox virus may include: encephalitis ,bronchopneumonia, secondary infection, sepsis,and cornea may also be affected.

However these symptoms alone should not be the only factor for diagnosis. It is advised that laboratory test be carried out on the person displaying the above symptoms .

Does Monkeypox Have a Cure?

As of the time of writing this article, there is no medically approved cure to handle the monkeypox disease, though there are ways to control the self-limiting disease till the symptoms hopefully die down. Some of these ways are:-

1. The infected person should take enough fluids and food; the person's nutritional status should be at a healthy level.
2. Secondary infections caused by bacteria should be dealt with as directed by your health practitioner.
3. Tecovirimat, which is an antiviral agent for smallpox, has been approved to help against monkeypox too.

Vaccination against Monkeypox.

The most recent vaccine for the disease is based on a modified attenuated vaccinia virus. However, some previously developed vaccines for small pox have been approved to help against monkeypox too.

How To Prevent Monkeypox Disease ?

Awareness about the virus has to be made on several fronts in the context of what the disease is, how it is gotten, where to get vaccines, and the expected symptoms.

It has been discovered that most infections are through zoonotic sources (animal to person). People have to be more careful when handling wild life as there is a risk of exposure to the virus.

Person to Person transmission can be avoided by avoiding physical contact with the sores and body fluids of an infected person.

References

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