



July 22, 2022

Dear Georgia Healthcare Providers:

Monkeypox cases are increasing rapidly among Georgia residents, particularly in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Clinical evaluation and testing of suspect cases are critical to slow transmission of this virus, and health care providers can perform these testing activities safely when standard infection prevention practices are used. The needed supplies should be available in most clinical settings. We are encouraging all Georgia providers, including primary care providers and urgent care centers, to offer these monkeypox testing services to patients to expand access to testing, and help identify cases rapidly to prevent further spread of this virus.

When standard infection prevention activities are performed, including the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), the risk of exposure to monkeypox virus in a clinical setting is extremely low.

When a patient is suspected of having monkeypox or has a rash consistent with monkeypox, they should be placed in a single-person room. Special air-handling is **not needed**. The number of staff interacting with the patient should be limited. PPE should include gloves, gown, eye protection, and a mask. For the mask, CDC recommends at minimum an N-95 respirator, but CDC's criteria to assess monkeypox exposure indicates that a surgical mask prevents intermediate and high-risk exposures in the absence of aerosolizing procedures. More detailed guidance is available here: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/clinicians/infection-control-healthcare.html>

Monkeypox exposure risk assessment, including surgical mask use, can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/clinicians/monitoring.html>

Testing is readily available

At the time of this letter, five commercial laboratories are offering monkeypox testing in Georgia: LabCorp, Quest Diagnostics, Aegis Sciences, Sonic Healthcare, and Mayo Clinic Laboratories. Commercial testing guidance can be found here:

<https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/monkeypox-commercial-testing-guidance-georgia-providers/download>

Because not all clinics and providers have access to these labs, testing is still available through the Georgia Public Health Laboratory. Guidance on submitting specimens can be found here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/monkeypox-han-update-06132022/download>

Do not delay other diagnostic testing, procedures, or treatment that is indicated for suspect *Monkeypox virus* infections or other conditions while testing is pending.

Patients can continue to be managed safely if the appropriate infection prevention measures are in place. Medical countermeasures such as antiviral therapy for patients and post-exposure prophylaxis for close contacts can be requested based on clinical assessment before results are returned for suspect patients.

Outpatients need to be given isolation guidance

Providing isolation guidance to patients is very important in limiting the spread of monkeypox virus. Any patient that is suspected of having monkeypox, even if it is a low index of suspicion, should be asked to isolate away from others while any tests are pending. Details on home isolation can be found in the link below. It is important to note that lab results may take several days to be returned depending on the laboratory used and current testing volume and availability. Patients who meet suspect case criteria for monkeypox can receive medical countermeasures such as antivirals, if indicated, and their close contacts can access post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) based on high-risk exposure to a suspect case.

Georgia DPH Isolation guidance: <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/home-isolation-guidance-monkeypox/download>

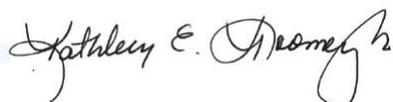
Monkeypox case definitions: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/clinicians/case-definition.html>

Additional resources

- Georgia DPH's Monkeypox Page for Providers: <https://dph.georgia.gov/epidemiology/acute-disease-epidemiology/monkeypox/information-providers>
- Medical countermeasures
 - Antivirals are available upon request for patients with severe disease or who are at risk of developing severe disease. Current guidance on the use of tecovirimat is available here: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/clinicians/Tecovirimat.html>. Providers can contact TPOXXOrders@dph.ga.gov to request tecovirimat. Please include the provider's phone number and email contact information. (Revised 8-5-2022)
 - Vaccines are still in limited supply and are being prioritized for close contacts of patients with a high risk of exposure. At this time, most clinicians in the United States are not advised to be vaccinated due to low likelihood of exposure ([Monkeypox and Smallpox Vaccine Guidance | Monkeypox | Poxvirus | CDC](#)). In the unlikely event that a high-risk exposure does occur in the clinical setting, facilities should reach out to 1-866-PUB-HLTH for information on obtaining post-exposure prophylactic vaccination.
- CDC Information for Healthcare Professionals: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/clinicians/index.html>
- 2022 Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity CDC calls, including updates about monkeypox diagnosis and treatment: <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/2022/index.asp>

Thank you for all you are doing to help stop this current outbreak of monkeypox and to keep your patients healthy along with all Georgians.

Sincerely,



Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner and State Health Officer