

**News Release**

**For Immediate Release**

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**Monkeypox 101**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has received requests for information on the monkeypox virus that is currently circulating around the world. Monkeypox is a virus that causes a distinctive blistering rash and is usually a mild illness. There have been 15 cases identified in Nebraska, none of which are in the SWNPHD nine-county area.

Residents of southwest Nebraska are at very low risk of monkeypox at this time. This virus spreads through direct contact with the characteristic rash associated with an active infection of monkeypox. It can also spread through touching objects or surfaces recently used by someone with monkeypox or contact with respiratory secretions. A person with monkeypox can spread it to others from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks.

Other symptoms of monkeypox include muscle aches, headache, fever, swollen glands, and exhaustion. In rare cases monkeypox can cause severe illness including sepsis, encephalitis (brain swelling), or other conditions needing hospitalization. People at risk of severe illness are those who are immune-compromised, pregnant or breastfeeding, children younger than 8, or who have a history of certain skin conditions.

Treatment with antivirals is available in Nebraska for people at risk of severe illness from monkeypox. Healthcare providers can request testing through the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory for patients with symptoms of monkeypox.

There is a vaccine that protects against monkeypox called Jynneos. Due to the limited doses available and the extremely low risk from this virus, the vaccine is currently only available in specific high-risk situations, such as people who have had direct contact with someone who has a confirmed case of monkeypox. Some protection is believed to exist for those who received a smallpox vaccination when they were younger, usually people born before 1972.

“For our nine-county area, monkeypox is a low risk right now,” states Melissa Propp RN, Clinic Manager with Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. “We encourage anyone experiencing unexplained rash along with flu-like symptoms to contact their healthcare provider.”

For questions about monkeypox, call your health care provider or Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. The website [swhealth.ne.gov](http://swhealth.ne.gov) contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram. For questions, call 308-345-4223, one number three locations (McCook, Imperial & Ogallala).

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