
MEMORANDUM

CWCD 2022-164

Subject: Update on Monkeypox Preparedness in Niagara

Date: July 8, 2022

To: Board of Health/Regional Council

From: Dr. Azim Kasmani, Associate Medical Officer of Health

Dear Councillors,

I wanted to take a moment to update you on the current monkeypox situation, as well as on how Public Health is responding.

As of this writing, there have been no confirmed cases of monkeypox among Niagara residents. Some 101 cases have been confirmed in Ontario, with 85 of those being in Toronto. Across Canada, 300 cases have been confirmed with 211 of those in Quebec, and over 5,800 cases have been identified globally as part of this outbreak.

Ontario's Ministry of Health has designated monkeypox a Disease of Public Health Significance under the *Health Protection and Act*, ensuring Public Health is made aware of any infections of this virus. Niagara Region Public Health is taking steps to identify, prepare for, and respond to any future cases in our community, including

- Following-up on all suspected infections to ensure individuals are following precautions to prevent further spread as well as conducting contact tracing
- Assessing clients at our sexual health centres for signs of monkeypox; while monkeypox is not a sexually transmitted disease and anyone can be at risk, there has been a high degree of transmission in some sexual networks
- Preparing for possible small-scale vaccination clinics for close contacts of any future confirmed cases or individuals at high-risk, as identified by the Ministry of Health
- Creating messaging [on our website](https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/monkeypox.aspx) (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/monkeypox.aspx>) and social media channels educating the public on monkeypox, how it spreads and what to do if you think you may be infected or at risk

So far, Public Health has followed up with nine individuals tested for monkeypox; to date none have tested positive and so none of these have been deemed a case.

At-risk individuals may benefit from receiving a dose of smallpox/monkeypox vaccine. With only limited vaccine available in Canada currently, governments are prioritizing vaccine to areas with the greatest risk. At present since we have not had any identified infections, we have not yet received vaccine from the Province. Nonetheless, we are preparing to run clinics should vaccine be assigned to us.

Throughout all of this, we are continuing to coordinate with the Province, neighbouring local public health agencies, as well as local partners and health care providers to ensure alignment in our response. As there are further significant developments, we will be sharing additional updates. Please do reach out if you have questions in the interim.

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is normally found in some species of animals in parts of Western and Central Africa. It can be transmitted to humans but is generally not present in Canada except for travel related cases. Recently, cases of human-to-human transmission of monkeypox have been identified in Canada and other countries.

Human-to-human spread usually happens in situations where someone comes into direct physical contact with an infected person's rash or other bodily fluids, or with contaminated bedding or clothes. Symptoms often include fever, headache, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes and rash. The strain causing this outbreak usually causes mild disease that does not require special treatment in otherwise healthy people.

People who think they may be infected or are experiencing symptoms should self-isolate and contact their family doctor to get tested as soon as possible.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Dr. Azim Kasmani, MD, FRCPC
Associate Medical Officer of Health