



**EUROPEAN
PRIDE** ORGANISERS
ASSOCIATION

Monkeypox – important information for festivals, Pride events, and large gatherings

You will have heard recent reports of an outbreak of monkeypox in some parts of Europe and, increasingly, in other parts of the world where monkeypox virus has previously been rarely seen.

Since the emergence of these new outbreaks, there have been concerns raised in some quarters that large events – such as festivals, Pride events, and other large gatherings - might act as settings where monkeypox will be transmitted to large numbers of people.

Pride events have been especially noted because the majority of recently diagnosed cases of monkeypox have been in gay and bisexual men. It is not the case that monkeypox can only be transmitted during sex between men - it is not a 'gay' virus. But it is likely that the earliest cases in these recent outbreaks were transmitted amongst men who have sex with men in particular sexual or social networks. It is possible that these new outbreaks could move beyond these networks – which is why everyone should understand how monkeypox can be transmitted, and the common symptoms of monkeypox.

Monkeypox can be transmitted through close physical contact (skin-to-skin) – including sex. It is also known that monkeypox can be transmitted in other ways including through respiratory droplets during face-to-face contact. We know it can also be transmitted via towels, bedding, and clothing, including in people sharing the same household.

This is an emerging public health issue and we're all still learning about how and why monkeypox is being transmitted in these ways. That means information might change – so it's important to stay up-to-date and to get information from reliable sources (see below). However, there is no previous or current evidence to suggest that large events in and of themselves facilitate the transmission of

monkeypox. Recent case finding suggests that monkeypox is primarily being transmitted via close physical contact, and not by people being together in crowds.

On Friday 10 June 2022, the World Health Organisation published updated guidance which states:

“We are not recommending cancellation of events or travel restrictions. As we enter the summer season of festivals, large gatherings and parties, it is what people do at these events that matters. As mentioned, monkeypox needs close physical contact between people so is not readily transmitted. We encourage safe sexual behaviour and good hygiene, like regular handwashing, to help limit transmission of the virus. Summer festivals can be good opportunities to reach out to specific population groups with public health messaging.”

Festivals, Pride events, and other large gatherings play an essential role within our communities. They provide space to celebrate, socialise and to build community, and are a place where people can find out more about their health and well-being. Such events are an important asset and partner in these current public health outbreaks, along with community organisations, health services, public health experts, and commercial or business partners.

So, despite calls for such events to be postponed or cancelled, we do not support such calls. Not only would it be a disproportionate response, it would be counter-productive: such gatherings provide a setting in which we can share information about monkeypox, and promote the health and well-being of our communities more widely. These calls are also often made by people and organisations who oppose Pride and all that it stands for; they are using monkeypox as a tool in their armoury of hate.

The information below helps us to understand the steps we can take together to look after the people who attend these festivals, events, and gatherings.

This information has been produced by community organisations that are used to and experienced at working for the health of our communities, along with public health experts along with the European Pride Organisers Association which represents more than 150 Pride organisations across Europe.

It is important to have a balanced and proportionate response to the current monkeypox outbreak. Monkeypox can be unpleasant for people who get it. For most people it will involve a few weeks of recovery at home but some people have been hospitalised as a result of their monkeypox symptoms. The current

public health outbreak response is being undertaken to try to reduce the numbers of people who get monkeypox.

Looking after the people who attend festivals, events and gatherings

Organisers and promoters of events can play a key and important role in educating the people who attend about monkeypox, including alerting them to the common symptoms of monkeypox

Currently, we know those symptoms include: recent unusual rashes, spots, ulcers or blisters on the body; swollen lymph glands; fever, headaches and muscle aches; chills and exhaustion.

If someone has these symptoms, they can – respectfully and sympathetically - be asked to take a break and not attend the event, or a particular venue at an event (such as one where close physical contact might take place), until they seek medical advice and know they're well (see below).

This could be done by:

- Sharing reputable public health information on social media regularly in the run-up to the event
- Displaying an information poster at the entrance of an event about monkeypox symptoms (see below)
- Prominently displaying posters and information about monkeypox around the event. Putting up posters in toilet cubicles and above urinals is a great way to grab attention
- If an event is a ticketed or advertised event, by providing this advice on ticket information, or pre-event information being sent out
- If an event has a mailing list, information could be out via the list
- By posting information on social media of the event or festival
- Including prominent information on the event's website and app

Given that monkeypox won't be the only health issue that will be important to different groups of people attending events, information about monkeypox can be included *alongside* other health and well-being information. That might include information on safer sex, contraception, safer drug use, avoiding sun-stroke, hydration tips, and hand-washing. It might also include broader hygiene tips such as being aware of water and food safety, or how to travel to or from an event safely. Highlighting monkeypox information *alongside* other health promotion also facilitates information reaching key target groups – such as men who have sex with men – whilst avoiding being seen to finger point: this is especially important in settings where homosexuality is stigmatised or illegal.

Looking after staff and volunteers working at festivals, events and gatherings

Organisers and promoters of events can ensure their staff know the common symptoms of monkeypox (as above)

If any staff or volunteers has these symptoms, they can – respectfully and sympathetically – be asked to take a break and not work the event, or a particular venue at an event (such as one where close physical contact might take place), until they seek medical advice and know they're well (see below). This should be done within relevant employment legislative frameworks, and without stigmatising staff and volunteers.

In some instances, close contacts of people with monkeypox who are assessed to be at higher risk are being offered a vaccine, depending on regional availability. If staff or volunteers have been identified to be at higher risk, they might be able to be provided with vaccination.

Making events, festivals and gatherings safer

Events, festivals and gatherings *should continue to follow standard cleaning protocols*. Existing cleaning materials and products can be used. Specialist cleaning services or equipment is NOT required.

This is also a good opportunity for events and festivals to check that other standard tools are in place to be a healthy venue or space more generally. This includes having bathroom facilities that are appropriate, sufficient for the numbers attending, regularly cleaned and emptied, and that do not contaminate the environment; appropriate hand cleaning and drying facilities; access to hand sanitisers, face masks and other COVID harm-reduction equipment; free and clean drinking water; sun cream; having condoms and lube available; and appropriate first aid equipment, and safety services.

Getting more information and support

If someone has the symptoms listed above, they are advised to call contact their local appropriate health service, as soon as possible. They should NOT visit a health centre without phoning first to get advice.

[PrEPster and The Love Tank – www.queerhealth.info/monkeypox](http://www.queerhealth.info/monkeypox)

[European Pride Organisers Association -
https://www.epoa.eu/monkeypox-information-for-pride-organisers/](https://www.epoa.eu/monkeypox-information-for-pride-organisers/)

[European Centre for Disease Control -
https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/navigating-monkeypox-considerations-gay-and-bisexual-men-and-msm](https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/navigating-monkeypox-considerations-gay-and-bisexual-men-and-msm)

[World Health Organisation guidance 10/06/22
https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/10-06-2022-monkeypox-q-a---what-you-need-to-know-about-monkeypox](https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/10-06-2022-monkeypox-q-a---what-you-need-to-know-about-monkeypox)

V1 13 June 2022