



Monkeypox Fears Prompts UK Clinics To Bring Back Social Distancing

Description

UK: Sexual health clinics have reintroduced social distancing due to fears about an 'unprecedented' spate of Monkeypox cases in the UK.

One NHS clinic in West London had already brought in stricter infection control measures , before the total number of British monkeypox cases [rose to nine](#).

'Experts' insist that the virus will not take off like Covid, however, Britain is already [stocking up on thousands monkeypox vaccines](#) and other treatments amid fears that the current spate of cases are only the tip of the iceberg.

Cases have also been confirmed in the US, Spain and Portugal, making it the most widespread monkeypox outbreak to date. Canada has also reported suspected cases.

The [Mail Online](#) reports: Patients were told to keep a one-metre distance in the waiting room and were asked if they had any unusual bumps or rashes prior to each appointment.

A health source told MailOnline the stricter measures were not part of new national guidance but they could not rule out some NHS boards 'putting in measures locally'.

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) bosses have now written to regional NHS teams telling them to stock up on PPE and be on alert for patients with a new rash.

Seven Britons have been diagnosed with monkeypox and six of them appear to have contracted it in the UK, in a sign the virus is spreading in the community.

Five are in London, one in the South East, and one in the North East. Four of the cases are in gay or bisexual men.

The first UK patient, who was diagnosed nearly two weeks ago, had brought the virus back from Nigeria, where the disease is endemic.

Transmission between people is 'unusual' and 'surprising', according to experts, but any outbreak is likely to be small.

Dr Michael Head, a public health expert from the University of Southampton, said: 'There's currently gaps in our knowledge, and the contact tracing and public health investigation being carried out by UKHSA will no doubt reveal more in due course, for example about how pattern of transmission.

'However, it would be very unusual to see anything more than a handful of cases in any outbreak, and we won't be seeing Covid-style levels of transmission.'

At least three patients are receiving care at specialist NHS units in London and Newcastle.

Officials stress that the virus rarely spreads between humans but when it does it is through very close contact.

Monkeypox is not known to be a sexually transmitted disease. It can kill up to 10 per cent of people who get it.

Gay and bisexual men in particular are being urged to look out for unusual symptoms.

But all seven UK cases have the West African form of it, which is less deadly, killing about one in 100 people.

The virus can be mistaken for more common illnesses such as chickenpox, measles, syphilis and scabies, so is not always identified early.

In a letter sent to regional health teams on Monday, the UKHSA urged hospitals to ensure they have appropriate PPE in stock.

They have also been told to look out for patients who have rashes without a clear diagnosis.

by Niamh Harris

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