

Clinician Update

July 28, 2022

Monkeypox: The Latest with Dr. Martin Topiel

Monkeypox cases continue to rise around the world. As of today, there are about 4,600 confirmed cases in the United States, with more than 100 in New Jersey and more than 1,200 in New York. We asked Dr. Martin Topiel, chief of infectious diseases, to tell us the latest. You can also consult the New Jersey Department of Health's new [monkeypox resource page](#).

In straightforward terms, what is monkeypox?

The monkeypox virus is in the same family of viruses that causes smallpox. Fortunately, it is milder than smallpox, and is rarely fatal. The virus can be traced back to two sources: Central Africa and West Africa. The West African variety is what appears to be causing the current international surge. As the name suggests, the virus can transfer from an animal to a human, but the cases we are monitoring are being transmitted from human to human.

What are the symptoms associated with monkeypox?

Many of the early symptoms are similar to the flu, such as fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes, and chills. Another early indicator, the telltale sign, is a rash that, in many cases, first appears on the face and spreads to other parts of the body. Many people, but not all, will also develop lesions, which can range in size and number. It's important to note that different people will experience different symptoms – and to differing degrees. Generally, the illness lasts two to four weeks.

How does monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox does not spread easily from person to person without close contact with a symptomatic individual. It is most often transmitted during sex – whether that's direct skin-to-skin contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or bodily fluids — or through respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact.

The majority of cases in the United States have been among men who have sex with other men. It is important that we do not stigmatize or marginalize anyone – while still ensuring that those who are high-risk are aware of the risk factors.

To be clear: the virus is not exclusive to any specific population or demographic. There have been cases among children, as well as incidences of pregnant people passing the virus to their fetus.

The virus can also spread by touching items, like clothing or linens, previously worn or used by a person with monkeypox. This could obviously be a concern in health care settings, where our teams provide direct, hands-on care to people.

What treatment options are available?

For the majority of individuals, the infection will run its course over a couple of weeks. Those folks should self-isolate to ensure they do not transmit the virus to others.

That said, the percent of people who require antiviral therapy to help alleviate painful lesions is higher than what experts initially anticipated. It's now learned that about 20 to 30% of people who contract

monkeypox will benefit from medical intervention. Preventive vaccines will also increasingly be available for exposed individuals and persons in high-risk groups

How can we protect ourselves?

Education is always the best protection.

First, it's important to know if you are at an elevated risk for contracting monkeypox, or if there are factors that would make you more susceptible to severe illness should you contract it.

Preventive vaccines will be made available for those who are at greater risk. For instance, Canada and the United Kingdom are already offering vaccinations to non-monogamous men who have sex with men. The New Jersey Department of Health is presently working through its own process; three vaccine clinics have been established in northern New Jersey already. More information will be available in the days ahead.

Anyone who had contact with someone who had a rash resembling monkeypox or engaged in high-risk encounters should schedule an urgent care telehealth appointment, particularly if they exhibit any of the aforementioned screenings. This is even more critical for anyone with compromised immunity, HIV, or who is pregnant.

The vaccine can also be beneficial after transmission. It's best and most effective to receive the vaccine within four days of a contact exposure, but it can still help reduce symptoms 10 days after that.

What do health care workers need to know for on-the-job safety?

Given the contagious nature of virus, PPE will be required for any interaction with patients with suspected or confirmed monkeypox. This includes an N-95, goggles, gowns, and gloves for mucous membrane, cutaneous, and respiratory protection. It's important to don and doff PPE properly to avoid possibilities of exposure when turning, bathing, assisting with transfer, or any aspect of providing care. This is particularly necessary when testing and swabbing lesions.

Colleagues should also monitor their own health, of course, and should seek medical evaluation if they suspect they have been exposed to – or are developing symptoms of – monkeypox.

How can we prevent monkeypox exposures in the outpatient setting?

In the days ahead, all Virtua Medical Group practices will introduce screening questions for patients scheduling and arriving for appointments (similar to our process for screening for COVID-19). Should someone answer the screening questions in a way that indicates they may have contracted monkeypox or have a suspect rash, the colleague will advise them to make an Urgent Care Telehealth appointment for further assessment prior to any live visit. Details on how we respectfully and consistently enact this policy will be communicated throughout VMG.

What should a colleague do if they develop an unexplained rash or any of the associated symptoms?

As always, we want to maintain a safe environment for our patients and one another. Should you develop symptoms, isolate at home and separate yourself from other household members and pets as best as possible. You should not report to work. Instead, you should alert your leader and follow your team's standard protocol.

Colleagues should also monitor their own health, of course, and should seek medical evaluation if they suspect they have been exposed to – or are developing symptoms of – monkeypox.

Monkeypox Latest in NJ

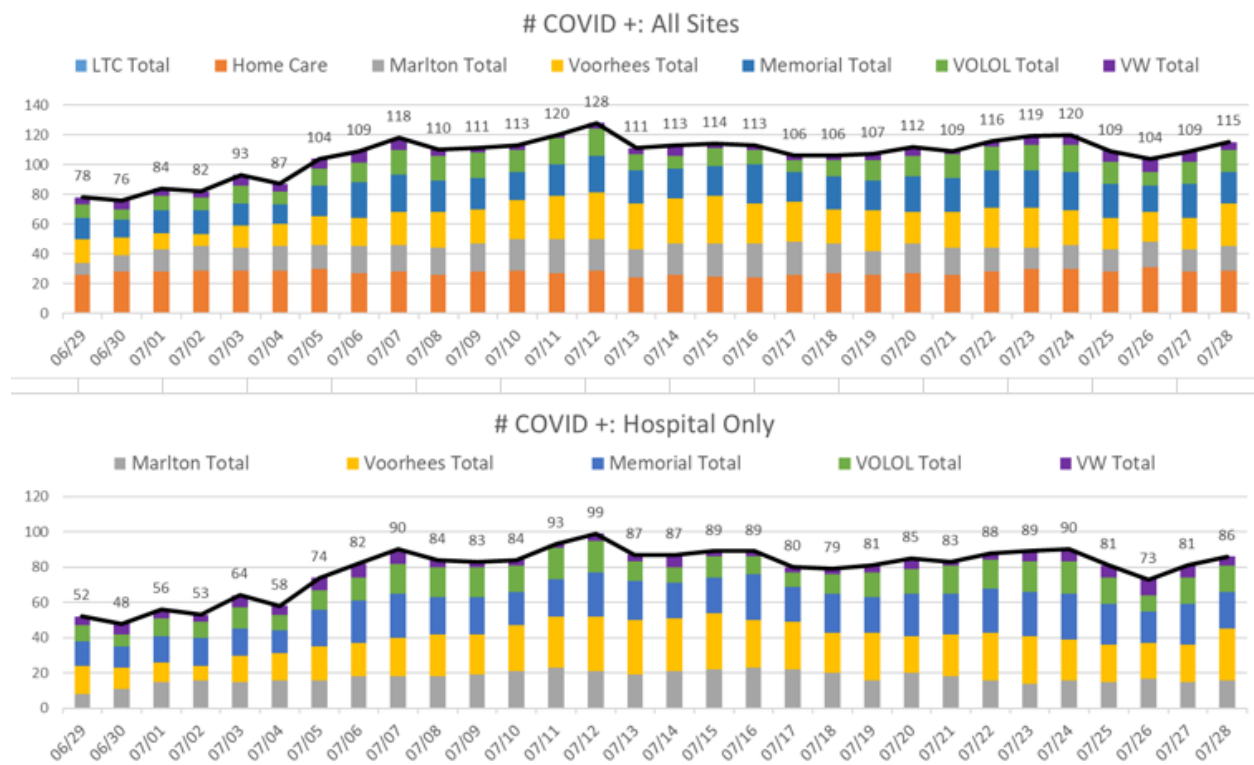
The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) is working in conjunction with CDC and local health departments to quickly identify monkeypox cases and close contacts, provide treatment and vaccine, and further prevent the spread of disease. NJDOH now includes a [link](#) on its website concentrated on Monkeypox as part of its Communicable Disease Service.

Latest Monkeypox Stats from NJDOH

- The total number of cases in New Jersey reported as of 3 p.m. today: **109**

For Alerts, Vaccine Information, Education Materials, as well information for healthcare providers and local health departments, click here for [Monkeypox resource information from NJDOH](#).

COVID-19 Census



Latest COVID-19 Fast Facts

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey was reported yesterday as 1.04.
- The total number of cases reported as of 3 p.m. today:
 - Atlantic County 62,107 cases
 - Burlington County: 97,486 cases
 - Camden County: 118,522 cases
 - Gloucester County: 61,059 cases
- COVID-associated mortality for Camden, Burlington, Gloucester, and Atlantic counties: 4,778.
- The state's Vaccination Overview dashboard reported 18,318,469 doses of vaccine have been administered.

Virtua in the News

Virtua Voorhees & Our Lady of Lourdes Among Top N.J. Hospitals - [U.S. News & World Report](#) has named Virtua Voorhees and Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes to its 2022-23 list of the best-performing hospitals in New Jersey and the Philadelphia region. Additionally, all Virtua hospitals received recognition as high-performing for select services. Read [here](#) and in [Virtua's press release](#).

Rectal Cancer Program Receives Prestigious Accreditation - Virtua's program is one of less than 60 in the U.S. to receive this endorsement from the National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer, and one of just two in New Jersey. "NAPCR accreditation is confirmation of our team achieving the highest standards of rectal cancer treatments and care," said program director Dr. Avi Galler. Read [here](#).

Heat Waves, Dehydration Can Be Dangerous, Especially for Seniors - Older adults are particularly prone to dehydration and more during the summer's heat. The condition can cause confusion, dizziness, and life-threatening complications. Virtua neurologist Dr. Parth Modi offered advice for how to stay safe and ensure you're drinking enough fluids. Watch on [6 ABC](#) or read in [PhillyVoice](#).

Virtua Cancer Experts Explain Advances, Importance of Screenings - Dr. Matthew Puc, program director of the Penn Medicine | Virtua Cancer Program, discussed new treatment advances – including South Jersey's first proton therapy center – in [NJBiz](#). He and Dr. Elizabeth Revesz, a breast surgeon with the program, also weighed in on the importance of cancer screenings [here](#).

Dr. Blaber to Chair AHA Heart Walk

Virtua Health is a sponsor for the American Heart Association's **2022 Southern New Jersey Fall Heart Walk** and our very own Dr. Reginald Blaber is serving as the chair of the event [Registration](#) for the walk is open now. Be sure to select Virtua Health as your participating organization when registering to ensure you receive your shirt for the day of the event!

When: **Saturday, Oct. 22, 2022**

Check-In: 8:30 a.m.

Start Time: 10 a.m.

Where: Riverwinds Community Center, 1000 Riverwinds Dr., West Deptford, NJ 08086

Congratulations to the July WE Award Winner Cindy Kennedy!

This month's WE Award winner embodies the Purposeful Leadership Guiding Principle. At the heart of this Guiding Principle is leading by example, serving with humility, and demonstrating a commitment toward others. It's about driving ourselves, each other, and our organization toward excellence.

Virtua Health is pleased to award the WE Award in the Purposeful Leadership category to Cindy Kennedy, clinical director of infection prevention. Here is an excerpt from the nomination, submitted by Elizabeth Zuccarelli, on behalf of the infection prevention managers.

We would like to recognize Cindy for all the work she has done during the pandemic. She was available day and night to address issues and concerns while assessing the emotional and physical needs of her staff. As the managers worked and re-worked processes, Cindy kept them all informed.

Cindy's guidance and tireless efforts were never ending. She offered constant encouragement. Under her leadership, the managers developed mask usage and other infection prevention guidelines to keep our colleagues and patients safe, especially during supply shortages.

But that's not all. Cindy was always working with multidisciplinary teams to develop best processes and practices that improve Virtua's safety outcomes. She stayed on top of current literature, reviewed CDC guidelines, and coordinated with colleagues from infection control and quality and safety. Under Cindy's leadership, well over 100 policies, signs, and processes were developed.

Congratulations Cindy!

To read the full nominations of all award winners to date, visit the [WE Awards page](#) on the VINE.

Five Stars for the NICU Team

We strive to provide personalized care in a healing and family-centered environment. Today's five-star review comes from Wendy C., a patient at Virtua Voorhees Hospital. Wendy C. highlights the high-level care she received from the NICU team after welcoming her son.

Our son came early and was cared for in the NICU for 23 days. We cannot imagine how we would have gotten through those trying days without the amazing care he received from the NICU team. Everyone—the nurses, doctors, respiratory therapists, nutritionists, discharge planning professionals, radiology team, unit secretaries, and housekeeping staff—were truly the kindest, most compassionate group of people we have ever met. We were kept informed and involved in the care of our son each and every step on the way. Having been a nurse for more than 20 years, I can honestly say that the NICU team is nothing short of the embodiment of health care angels...true patient advocates!

Patient feedback gives us the opportunity to celebrate our colleagues, helps us make operational adjustments to better serve the community, and impacts our internal goals. Remember, asking a patient to leave a review isn't asking for a favor; it is empowering them to make their voice heard and opinion known