

## Important Information on Monkeypox

As many of you may already know, the CDC and WHO are closely monitoring a global outbreak of monkeypox, an infectious viral disease that is usually seen in African countries, which has been spreading across the United States and Europe since May 2022. Through August 3<sup>rd</sup>, the United States has reported more than 6,600 cases of monkeypox.

Unlike COVID-19, monkeypox is not a new virus. It is closely related to the smallpox virus family and was first discovered in 1958 among laboratory monkeys. Although smallpox was eradicated in the United States in 1972, monkeypox is now making a comeback, prompting the WHO to declare it a global health emergency.

Monkeypox symptoms include a pimple or blister-like rash, as well as fever, chills, fatigue, muscle aches, backache, and swollen lymph nodes. The majority of monkeypox cases experience mild to moderate symptoms, although it can rarely be fatal, especially in places with inadequate health care.

Fortunately, monkeypox does not spread as easily as COVID-19 or the flu. The virus is transmitted by prolonged close contact with a symptomatic person, including intimate contact (kissing, cuddling, and sex), direct contact with infectious rashes, scabs, or body fluids, and touching items (linens and clothing) previously in contact with an infectious rash or body fluids. The illness usually lasts 2-4 weeks. It is important to understand that **anyone** can become infected with monkeypox and to take the proper precautions. The virus does not discriminate in terms of who it infects.

Since monkeypox and smallpox viruses are genetically similar, vaccines and antiviral medications already developed to protect against smallpox may be used to prevent and treat monkeypox virus infections. Although in limited supply, these vaccines are available through the public health department to individuals who meet certain eligibility requirements. Medications may also be recommended for people who are more likely to get severely ill, such as those with weakened immune systems.

The college is working closely with the Connecticut Department of Public Health and our medical partner, Hartford HealthCare, to facilitate the process of identifying infected individuals, providing monkeypox testing, acquiring vaccine for those who meet eligibility requirements, and offering treatment options as medically indicated.

The best way to prevent outbreaks on our campus is through direct and frequent communication. While the risk to the campus community currently remains low, we are preparing for the possibility of monkeypox cases on campus and will continue to keep the campus community informed about this and any other public health risks.

All of us play a role in keeping our campus safe. Please familiarize yourself with information (link to webpage) about the virus, how it spreads, and what to do if you think you have come in contact with someone who may be infected or experience symptoms yourself.