

Navajo Nation confirms first case of Monkeypox

Written by gallupsun

Wednesday, 24 August 2022 23:07

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Aug. 24, the Navajo Department of Health and the Navajo Epidemiology Center issued a Health Advisory Notice to inform the Navajo people of the first confirmed case of Monkeypox on the Navajo Nation. The individual is a member of the Navajo Nation residing in McKinley County.

In July, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez established a Monkeypox Preparedness Team tasked with monitoring, planning, and coordinating precautionary efforts to address Monkeypox, which was spreading across the country at the time. On Aug. 10, President Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer issued a letter through the Navajo Nation Washington Office to U.S. President Joe Biden and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra, requesting that Monkeypox vaccines be prioritized for tribal communities. The Navajo Area Indian Health Services reported that the first doses of the vaccine are expected to arrive to the Navajo Nation this week.

“We continue to take a proactive approach to mitigate Monkeypox here on the Navajo Nation, through the establishment of the Monkeypox Preparedness Team that includes our health care experts and by engaging with federal health officials and the White House. Through these efforts, we’ve been able to secure doses of the Monkeypox vaccines and they will be available to the Navajo people soon,” Nez said.

Nez asked the Navajo people to listen to public health experts.

“As cases of Monkeypox began to spread across the country and into the southwest, we knew we had to prepare. Just as we saw with COVID-19, it came to a point where every region surrounding the Navajo Nation was affected. Now, we have to listen to our public health experts and adhere to their guidance once again,” Nez said.

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The Office of the President and Vice President will hold an online town hall on Aug. 25 at 10 am MDT on the Nez-Lizer Facebook page to provide more information.

According to a facts sheet issued by the Navajo Department of Health, a person with Monkeypox may take five to 21 days to develop symptoms after exposure and may include a fever, malaise or general feeling of illness, headache, sometimes a sore throat and cough, and lymphadenopathy or enlarged/swollen lymph glands/nodes. Individuals often experience rashes on the face, inside the mouth, and other parts of the body including the genitals in the later stages – this is also when a person is most contagious.

Monkeypox is spread through skin-to-skin contact with infectious rashes, scabs, or bodily fluids, through contact with respiratory secretions, or by touching objects, fabrics, and surfaces that have been used by someone with Monkeypox. It also spread through sexual activity/intercourse, hugging, massaging, kissing, or prolonged face-to-face contact.

The Health Advisory Notice states that if someone is sick with Monkeypox, they should isolate at home, stay away from other people and pets, and to contact their health care provider for testing, care, and treatment. Vaccinations are recommended for people with close personal contacts of someone with Monkeypox. Contact a primary care physician for further vaccine recommendations.

For more information regarding Monkeypox contact a local health provider and visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention webpage

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**<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/> and Navajo Department of Health webpage
<https://ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/>.**

The Navajo Department of Health facts sheet is available at:

<https://ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/Portals/0/PDF/NNDOH%20FACT%20SHEET%20Monkeypox.pdf>.

