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**CIRCULAR**

In wake of recent declaration of Mpox as a public health emergency of international concern by World Health Organisation (WHO) and recent epidemiological developments in Pakistan and Kenya, all community members are advised to ensure health safety of each other by opting for a cautious approach. Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination (NHSRC), Islamabad has issued detailed guidelines about Mpox which are available at the following link;

*<https://www.nih.org.pk/guidelines>*

2. Keeping in view the ongoing surge in Mpox cases, WHO has also issued certain recommendations/guidelines/advice for public to prevent illness and stay healthy. These guidelines can be found at <https://www.who.int/news-room/public-advice>. For ease of the community members a brief introduction and necessary information relating to Mpox is as follows;

3. **Overview:** Mpox (monkeypox) is an infectious disease caused by the monkeypox virus. It can cause a painful rash, enlarged lymph nodes and fever. Most people fully recover, but some get very sick. Anyone can get mpox. It spreads from contact with infected persons, materials and animals. Pregnancy may also pass the virus on to the unborn child. If you have mpox:

- Tell anyone you have been close to recently
- Stay at home until all scabs fall off and a new layer of skin forms
- Cover lesions and wear a well-fitting mask when around other people
- Avoid physical contact.

4. **Transmission:** Person-to-person transmission of mpox can occur through direct contact with infectious skin or other lesions. Animal to human transmission of mpox occurs from infected animals to humans from bites or scratches, or during activities such as hunting, skinning, trapping, cooking, playing with carcasses, or eating animals. The extent of viral circulation in animal populations is not entirely known and further studies are underway. People can contract mpox from contaminated objects such as clothing or linens, through sharps injuries in health care, or in community setting such as tattoo parlours.

5. **Signs and symptoms:** Mpox causes signs and symptoms which usually begin within a week but can start 1–21 days after exposure. Symptoms typically last 2–4 weeks but may last longer in someone with a weakened immune system. Common symptoms of mpox are:

- rash
- fever
- sore throat
- headache





- muscle aches
- back pain
- low energy
- Swollen lymph nodes.

Some people may have one or a few skin lesions and others have hundreds or more. These can appear anywhere on the body such as palms of hands, soles of feet, face, mouth, throat, groin and anus/genital areas.

6. Typically for mpox, fever, muscle aches and sore throat appear first. The mpox rash begins on the face and spreads over the body, extending to the palms of the hands and soles of the feet and evolves over 2-4 weeks in stages – macules, papules, vesicles, pustules. Lesions dip in the centre before crusting over. Scabs then fall off. Lymphadenopathy (swollen lymph nodes) is a classic feature of mpox. Please note that some people can be infected without developing any symptoms.

7. **Diagnosis:** Identifying mpox can be difficult as other infections and conditions can look similar. It is important to distinguish mpox from chickenpox, measles, bacterial skin infections, scabies, herpes, syphilis, other sexually transmissible infections, and medication-associated allergies. Detection of viral DNA by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is the preferred laboratory test for mpox. The best diagnostic specimens are taken directly from the rash – skin, fluid or crusts – collected by vigorous swabbing. In the absence of skin lesions, testing can be done on oropharyngeal, anal or rectal swabs. Testing blood is not recommended. Antibody detection methods may not be useful as they do not distinguish between different orthopoxviruses.

8. **Treatment and vaccination:** The goal of treating mpox is to take care of the rash, manage pain and prevent complications. Early and supportive care is important to help manage symptoms and avoid further problems. Getting an mpox vaccine can help prevent infection. The vaccine should be given within 4 days of contact with someone who has mpox (or within up to 14 days if there are no symptoms).

9. **Prevention & Self-care:** Most people with mpox will recover within 2–4 weeks.

DO's

- stay home and in your own room if possible
- wash hands often with soap and water or hand sanitizer, especially before or after touching sores
- wear a mask and cover lesions when around other people until your rash heals
- keep skin dry and uncovered (unless in a room with someone else)
- avoid touching items in shared spaces and disinfect shared spaces frequently
- use saltwater rinses for sores in the mouth
- take sitz baths or warm baths with baking soda or Epsom salts for body sores
- take over-the-counter medications for pain like paracetamol (acetaminophen) or ibuprofen.

Don'ts

- pop blisters or scratch sores, which can slow healing, spread the rash to other parts of the body, and cause sores to become infected; or

- shave areas with sores until scabs have healed and you have new skin underneath (this can spread the rash to other parts of the body).

10. To prevent spread of mpox to others, persons with mpox should isolate at home, or in hospital if needed, for the duration of the infectious period (from onset of symptoms until lesions have healed and scabs fall off). Covering lesions and wearing a medical mask when in the presence of others may help prevent spread.

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