



Mpox* Laboratory Testing Information for Healthcare Providers

Overview

There are a number mpox testing options available to healthcare providers. Given capacity limitations at the Montana Public Health Lab (MTPHL), it is recommended that healthcare facilities designate a reference lab partner to which they can send out specimens for mpox testing and communicate this plan with their providers. Providers may send specimens from any suspect mpox case to a reference lab, including high-suspect cases; please notify your LHD of high-suspect mpox cases and any positive mpox results. This document describes specific testing instructions for several reference laboratories and the Montana Public Health Laboratory, including the cost and sample collection methodology.

Healthcare providers are required to notify their [local health department](#) of suspect mpox cases and of any positive mpox or *orthopoxvirus* results during daytime hours, including weekends (ARM 37.114.201). Regardless of where a specimen is sent for testing, if clinical suspicion for mpox is high, then [local public health should be notified](#). Timely communication with your local health department will facilitate a coordinated and prompt public health response in the event of a positive result (i.e., contact tracing, vaccination of high-risk close contacts, therapeutics, etc.). Providers can use the *Provider Algorithm for MPOX Testing* on the DPHHS website to help determine high/medium/low suspicion for mpox cases and appropriate steps for testing: [Monkeypox Healthcare Provider Information \(mt.gov\)](#)

Please note: Some labs perform *orthopoxvirus* testing and some perform mpox-specific testing. According to CDC, a positive *orthopoxvirus* test result is enough for healthcare providers and public health authorities to take necessary actions for the patient and help prevent additional spread—the same actions they would take for a positive mpox test result. Providers may discuss indeterminate mpox results with public health to determine if recollection is recommended.

Testing instructions vary slightly by lab, so please pay special attention to whether swabs should be placed in a dry container or in viral transport media, and note the temperature at which the specimen should be shipped. DPHHS does not supply specimen collection supplies to labs in Montana. Swabs and sterile tubes can be purchased from almost any medical supply vendor.

*Mpox, formally known as monkeypox.