

24 May 2022, Cairo, Egypt – The first case of monkeypox in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region has been reported by the Ministry of Health and Prevention in the United Arab Emirates as countries continue to scale up detection and response capacities for this viral disease. The patient is currently receiving treatment and additional suspected cases are being investigated.

As of 23 May, 131 confirmed cases have been reported from 18 countries across the different WHO regions, with an additional 106 suspected cases being investigated. The confirmed cases are reported from non-endemic countries that do not usually report monkeypox outbreaks. There are no associated deaths to date.

“More suspected cases are being reported in our Region but not yet confirmed. In anticipation of additional confirmed cases in the Region, WHO urges countries to report against the WHO case definition and share information on cases reported on a timely basis. We are committed to providing information for health ministries, health workers, communities and people to inform them of monkeypox and how to protect themselves and their loved ones,” said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

As the situation rapidly evolves, WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is working closely with countries to scale up preparedness and response plans for monkeypox. The Regional Office continues to work closely with all countries to ensure that potential cases are quickly identified, tested and responded to.

Currently, the Regional Office is working to streamline laboratory support at the national level in all countries while strengthening rt-PCR testing, surveillance, case investigation and contact tracing.

As part of this holistic approach, the Regional Office will also provide ministries of health across the Region with a list of collaborating centres for sample shipment and testing while maintaining a sufficient supply of reagents and laboratory testing kits.

Recently, WHO issued interim guidance for countries to reinforce surveillance, case investigation, contact tracing and treatment to break the chains of transmission and stop the

outbreak.

About monkeypox

Monkeypox is a disease caused by the monkeypox virus. It is a zoonotic viral disease that can spread from animals to humans. It can also spread between people through close contact. Symptoms of monkeypox typically include skin rash or lesions, fever, intense headache, muscle aches, back pain, low energy, and swollen lymph nodes.

People with monkeypox are infectious while they have symptoms. Anyone can catch monkeypox through close physical contact with someone who has symptoms. The rash, bodily fluids (such as pus or blood from skin lesions) and scabs are particularly infectious. Clothing, bedding, towels or objects like eating utensils and dishes that have been contaminated with the virus from contact with an infected person can also infect others.

Ulcers, lesions or sores in the mouth can also be infectious, meaning the virus can spread through saliva. People who closely interact with someone who is infectious, including health workers, household members and sexual partners are therefore at greater risk for infection. The virus can also spread from a pregnant woman to the foetus, or to a child during or after birth through skin-to-skin contact. It is not yet clear whether people who do not have symptoms can spread the disease.

For further information, please contact:

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