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HHS Announces Enhanced Strategy to Vaccinate and Protect At-Risk Individuals from the Current Monkeypox Outbreak

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) today announced an enhanced nationwide vaccination strategy to mitigate the spread of monkeypox. The strategy will vaccinate and protect those at-risk of monkeypox, prioritize vaccines for areas with the highest numbers of cases, and provide guidance to state, territorial, tribal, and local health officials to aid their planning and response efforts.

Under the strategy, HHS is rapidly expanding access to hundreds of thousands of doses of the JYNNEOS vaccine for prophylactic use against monkeypox in areas with the highest transmission and need, using a tiered allocation system. Jurisdictions can also request shipments of the ACAM2000 vaccine, which is in much greater supply, but due to significant side effects is not recommended for everyone.

“Within days of the first confirmed case of monkeypox in the United States, we quickly began deploying vaccines and treatment to help protect the American public and limit the spread of the virus,” said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra. “While monkeypox poses minimal risk to most Americans, we are doing everything we can to offer vaccines to those at high-risk of contracting the virus. This new strategy allows us to maximize the supply of currently available vaccines and reach those who are most vulnerable to the current outbreak.”

HHS will provide 296,000 doses of JYNNEOS vaccine. Of that amount, 56,000 doses will be made available immediately, and an additional 240,000 doses will be made available in the coming weeks. HHS expects more than 750,000 additional JYNNEOS doses to be made available over the summer, and an additional 500,000 doses will undergo completion, inspection, and release throughout the fall, totaling 1.6 million doses available this year.

JYNNEOS vaccine will be allocated using a four-tier distribution strategy that prioritizes jurisdictions with the highest case rates of monkeypox. Within each tier, doses of JYNNEOS will be allocated based on the number of individuals at risk for monkeypox who also have a contraindication to ACAM2000 (i.e., those with HIV).

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices currently recommends vaccination for those at high risk following a confirmed monkeypox exposure. Given the large number of contacts and difficulty in identifying all contacts during the current outbreak, vaccine will now be provided to individuals with confirmed and presumed monkeypox exposures. This includes those who had close physical contact with someone diagnosed with monkeypox, those who know their sexual partner was diagnosed with monkeypox, and men who have sex with men who have recently had multiple sex partners in a venue where there was known to be monkeypox or in an area where monkeypox is spreading.

“We are focused on making sure the public and health care providers are aware of the risks posed by monkeypox and that there are steps they can take –through seeking testing, vaccines and treatments – to stay healthy and stop the spread,” said Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle Walensky, M.D., M.P.H.

To date, the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), in coordination with the CDC, has responded to requests from 32 jurisdictions, deploying more than 9,000 doses of vaccine and 300 courses of antiviral treatments. HHS will continue to evolve and strengthen its vaccine supply and distribution strategy to ensure the communities most in need have access to vaccinations to combat monkeypox. This includes being in regular communication with states and jurisdiction to monitor case rates and be responsive to requests made by jurisdiction to ensure the vaccine strategy continues to meet needs in real-time.

Today’s expanded vaccine strategy is part of the Biden Administration’s broader monkeypox outbreak response plan to mitigate the spread of the virus and protect those at highest risk. From day one of the outbreak, the Biden Administration acted with urgency to deploy testing and treatments to communities most impacted, scaling testing capacity to more than 70 labs in 48 states and began shipping its FDA-cleared orthopoxvirus tests last week to five major commercial labs to further increase testing capacity and convenience in every community. The Administration is also communicating regularly with community leaders, health care providers, and stakeholders in high-risk communities to raise awareness of the outbreak, and increase access to tests, vaccines, and treatments.

“We have vaccines and treatments to respond to the current monkeypox outbreak thanks to years of sustained investment and planning,” said HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Dawn O’Connell. “Our goal right now is to ensure that the limited supply of JYNNEOS vaccine is deployed to those who can benefit from it most immediately, as we continue to secure additional vaccine doses.”

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