

10 Jun 2022

Travelling internationally to celebrate Pride?

A reminder for travellers to international Pride events to be aware of health risks

As Pride season starts, with events planned worldwide, NaTHNaC is reminding anyone travelling to international Pride celebrations to protect themselves against health risks.

All festival goers, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) travellers are encouraged to take measures to protect themselves against illnesses, including [COVID-19](#) and other infections spread through close person-to-person contact, such as [monkeypox](#), HIV and other [sexually transmitted infections](#) (STIs).

New sexual partnerships and sex without condoms are relatively common in travellers, increasing the possibility of acquiring STIs. Increased sexual risk taking abroad can also be linked to alcohol intake [1]. There is increasing evidence that [gonorrhoea](#) is becoming an untreatable STI due to increasing drug resistance [2, 3] which could make it harder to control transmission of the infection in future.

[EuroPride](#) takes place in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia from 12 to 18 September 2022, with multiple other Pride events planned in Europe and worldwide throughout 2022.

Before travel

If you are celebrating Pride overseas, make sure you have comprehensive [travel insurance](#) and if you are travelling to mainland Europe, apply for a [UK Global Health Insurance Card](#). This helps you access state healthcare at a reduced rate and may be free in some countries.

Remember that while the United Kingdom (UK) has no current COVID-19 border health measures, many countries still have COVID-19 restrictions and requirements. Check Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) [travel advice for your destination](#); look at entry restrictions, screening and quarantine requirements. [See COVID-19: General advice for travellers](#) for more information.

Check our [Country Information Pages](#) to research the health risks, prevention advice and vaccine recommendations for your destination and, where appropriate, make an appointment with your practice nurse, pharmacist, sexual health clinic or other healthcare provider for vaccines and health advice before you go.

Make sure you are up to date with any [destination specific travel vaccines](#) and the routine UK vaccines such as [MMR](#). Consider also the STI prevention vaccines including those against human papillomavirus (HPV), hepatitis A and B viruses. Outbreaks of [hepatitis A](#) have been linked to Pride in Europe in the past [4, 5].

If unprotected sex is a possibility, discuss the use of [HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis/prevention \(PrEP\)](#) with a health professional before you travel. If appropriate, ensure you have access to contraception.

During travel

- Many infections can be spread by contaminated food and water- be careful what you eat and drink and follow basic [food hygiene rules](#).
- Some infections, like hepatitis A and Shigella, are spread via contaminated food and water, but can also be passed on by direct contact with a person with infection, including during sex involving anal contact or contact with faeces. Unlike hepatitis A, there is no vaccine to prevent Shigella. Further information on avoiding [sexual spread of hepatitis A](#) and [shigella](#) is available.
- Always be [aware of your risk](#) of STIs, carry condoms and follow [safer sex advice](#).
- In some countries, insects and ticks can spread infections - be aware of your risk and protect yourself by following [bite avoidance advice](#).

[Monkeypox](#) is found mainly in Central and West Africa, however in 2022, cases have been reported in many countries where this virus is not usually found, including the UK. Most cases reported in 2022 have been detected in gay and bisexual men who have sex with men (GBMSM), though not exclusively.

Monkeypox virus does not usually spread easily between people, but it can be passed on by close person-to-person contact, including sexual contact, or contact with items used by a person with the infection, such as clothes, bedding, towels or utensils [6]. Close contact with infected animals, especially rodents, is also a risk.

Cases of monkeypox are rare in people travelling, and the risk to the general public is considered to be low. Protect yourself while travelling by taking the following steps:

- Avoid contact (including sexual contact) with anyone who is unwell or has an unusual rash and [practise good hygiene before and after sex](#)
- Avoid touching contaminated items such as bedding/clothing or sharing eating utensils/cups of a person who has, or may have, monkeypox
- Wash hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser containing at least 60% alcohol
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth. If you need to touch your face, make sure your hands are clean
- Avoid animals when traveling
- For advice for people with HIV, see the British HIV Association (BHIVA) [statement on monkeypox virus](#).

If you are concerned about monkeypox or if you notice a rash, blisters or lesions, particularly if you have recently had a new sexual partner, or you have a fever, headache, chills, muscle/back ache, swollen glands (lymph nodes) or extreme tiredness:

- limit your contact with other people [7]
- get medical advice locally if you are abroad. Call ahead before going to a healthcare facility. If you are not able to call ahead, tell a staff member as soon as you arrive that you are concerned about monkeypox
- check with a health professional that you are fit to travel.

UK Health Security Agency guidance has been published for health professionals on the [use of vaccination during a monkeypox incident](#) [8].

After Travel

If you have a fever, flu like illness, persistent or bloody diarrhoea or any other unusual symptoms, get urgent medical help, explaining that you travelled abroad recently, you should call NHS 111 or a

sexual health centre immediately if you have a rash with blisters. Do not go to a sexual health clinic without contacting them first. Stay at home and avoid close contact with other people until you've been told what to do [7].

If you are symptom free, but had condomless sex or think you might have been exposed to an STI, get advice from a [sexual health clinic](#) as soon as possible.

Resources

- [NHS Choices: Sexual health for gay and bisexual men](#)
- [Terence Higgins Trust: Improving your sexual health](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency: Rise in extremely drug-resistant Shigella in gay and bisexual men](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency: Monkeypox cases confirmed in England - latest updates](#)

References

1. [TravelHealthPro. Sexually transmitted infections. Last updated 13 August 2019. \[Accessed 9 June 2021\]](#)
2. [UK Health Security Agency \(Public Health England\). Update on investigation of UK case of Neisseria gonorrhoeae with high level-resistance to azithromycin and resistance to ceftriaxone acquired abroad. Last updated 20 April 2020. \[Accessed 9 June 2022\]](#)
3. [World Health Organization. Multi-drug resistant gonorrhoea. 10 November 2021 \[Accessed 10 June 2022\]](#)
4. [Beebeejaun K, Degal S, Balogun K et al. Outbreak of hepatitis A associated with men who have sex with men \(MSM\), England, July 2016 to January 2017. Eurosurveillance Feb 2017; 22:5. \[Accessed 9 June 2022\]](#)
5. [European Centre for Disease Control. Epidemiological update: hepatitis A outbreak in the EU/EEA mostly affecting men who have sex with men. 12 September 2018. \[Accessed 9 June 2022\]](#)
6. [TravelHealthPro. Monkeypox: Clusters reported international in non-endemic countries. 24 May 2022. \[Accessed 9 June 2022\]](#)
7. [NHS Monkeypox \[Accessed 10 June 2022\]](#)
8. [UK Health Security Agency. Monkeypox vaccination. Last updated 6 June 2022. \[Accessed 9 June 2022\]](#)