



SMALLPOX FACT SHEET

WHAT IS SMALLPOX?

Smallpox is a serious infectious disease caused by the variola virus. In 1980, the World Health Assembly declared smallpox eliminated, and no cases of naturally occurring smallpox have happened since.

HOW DO YOU GET SMALLPOX?

- Before smallpox was eliminated, it was mainly spread by close contact between people.
- The virus spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes and droplets from their nose or mouth spread to other people.
- The virus can also spread through contaminated objects such as bedding or clothing.
- Infected individuals are contagious once the first sores appear in their mouth and throat and remain contagious until their last smallpox scab falls off.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms typically appear 7 to 19 days after exposure. A person with smallpox goes through several stages as the disease progresses. Initial symptoms include high fever, headache, body aches, and sometimes fever. After 2 to 4 days, a small red spot rash may appear on the tongue and in the mouth and spread to the face, arms, legs, hands, and feet. The spots become sores and fill with fluid. The sores eventually become sharply raised and firm. After about 5 days, the sores will crust and scab and will eventually fall off.

TREATMENT

There is no proven treatment for smallpox disease, but some antiviral drugs may help treat it or prevent it from getting worse. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

PREVENTION

Currently, the smallpox vaccine is not available to the general public because smallpox has been eliminated, and the virus no longer exists in nature. However, there is enough smallpox vaccine to vaccinate every person in the United States if a smallpox outbreak were to occur.

DGHD EFFORTS

Reports of disease are made to the Delaware General Health District (DGHD). The DGHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education.