

Monkeypox now called mpox

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In news— The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recently announced that it would start using the term “mpox” for monkeypox.

Naming of viruses:

- The naming of viruses is the responsibility of the International Committee on the Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV).
- Prior to the 2022 global monkeypox outbreak, there was already a process underway to reconsider the naming of all orthopoxvirus species, including monkeypox virus.
- This will continue under ICTV leadership.
- The change of name, announced after a series of consultations with global experts, has been provoked by the racist connotations that “monkeypox” sometimes carries.
- As per WHO, both names will be used simultaneously for one year while “monkeypox” is phased out,

What is Monkeypox?

- Monkeypox is a **viral zoonotic disease that occurs primarily in tropical rainforest areas of central and west Africa** and is occasionally exported to other regions.
- Monkeypox is a viral zoonosis (a virus transmitted to humans from animals) with **symptoms similar to those seen in the past in smallpox patients**, although it is clinically less severe.
- With the eradication of smallpox in 1980 and subsequent cessation of smallpox vaccination, monkeypox has emerged as the most important orthopoxvirus for public health.
- Monkeypox virus is an **enveloped double-stranded DNA virus that belongs to the Orthopoxvirus genus** of the

Poxviridae family.

- **There are two distinct genetic clades of the monkeypox virus:** the central African (Congo Basin) clade and the west African clade.
- The **Congo Basin clade has historically caused more severe disease** and was thought to be more transmissible.
- The geographical division between the two clades has so far been in Cameroon, the only country where both virus clades have been found.
- **Various animal species have been identified as susceptible to monkeypox virus. This includes** rope squirrels, tree squirrels, Gambian pouched rats, dormice, non-human primates and other species.
- Animal-to-human (zoonotic) transmission can occur from direct contact with the blood, bodily fluids, or cutaneous or mucosal lesions of infected animals.
- **Human monkeypox was first identified in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.**
- In fact, monkeypox, which was named in 1970 because the virus that causes the disease was first discovered in captive monkeys in 1958, does not have much to do with monkeys.