

# Frequently asked questions about **Alaskapox virus**

## **What is Alaskapox virus?**

Alaskapox virus was discovered in 2015 in a woman who lived near Fairbanks. As of September 2021, three more infections in people have been found. This virus belongs to a group of viruses called orthopoxviruses. These viruses infect mammals and cause skin lesions.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of Alaskapox virus?**

People with Alaskapox have had a skin lesion (see photos) and other symptoms like swollen lymph nodes and joint or muscle pain. Three of the patients with Alaskapox initially mistook the lesion for a spider or insect bite. No one has been hospitalized because of Alaskapox and the lesions heal after a few weeks.

## **Where is Alaskapox virus found?**

All four known infections occurred in people who lived in Fairbanks North Star Borough. It is possible that infections have occurred other places and have not been identified.

## **Where does the virus come from?**

We believe that Alaskapox virus primarily occurs in small mammals. We are not sure how exactly the virus spreads from animals to people.

## **Can people with Alaskapox infect other people?**

We have no evidence that the virus spreads from person to person. But some orthopoxviruses can spread by direct contact with skin lesions, so we recommend that people with skin lesions that might be caused by Alaskapox keep the lesion covered with a bandage.

## **What should I do if I think I have Alaskapox?**

Talk to a health care provider. He or she can assess whether your symptoms might be caused by Alaskapox or something else. Keep the lesion covered and avoid touching it.

## **What should health care providers do if they think a patient may have Alaskapox?**

If you suspect Alaskapox virus infection and have not identified an alternative diagnosis, contact the Alaska Section of Epidemiology at 907-269-8000. Advise the patient to keep the lesion covered with a bandage. Take photos of the lesion.



*An Alaskapox lesion about 10 days after symptom onset.*



*Close-up of same lesion as above about 12 days after symptom onset.*



*An Alaskapox lesion about 5 days after symptom onset; this lesion was about 1.2 cm across.*



*A different Alaskapox lesion about 5 days after symptom onset; this lesion was about 1 cm across.*



*The same lesion as above about 4 weeks after symptom onset.*

