

Singapore Begins Testing Seafarers for Monkeypox



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In a decision reminiscent of the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Singapore has decided to begin testing foreign seafarers for the presence of monkeypox on arrival.

From August 23 onward, Singapore's health ministry will carry out temperature and visual screening at the nation's two international airports for inbound travelers and crew. The exams will be limited to arriving flights from places which may be exposed to the risk of monkeypox outbreaks.

Similar screening measures will also be put in place at "sea checkpoints" for crew and passengers arriving on ships from monkeypox-affected areas.

This year, about 14,000 monkeypox cases and about 457 deaths have been reported. The outbreak is heavily concentrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has little contact with the shipping industry. A smaller number of cases have been reported elsewhere in Africa, and a handful in Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines and Sweden.

As of August, Singapore had 13 cases of a less serious strain of monkeypox, Clade II, which is generally transmitted through close contact. The city-state's sense of urgency stems from the emergence of a new and different strain of the virus in central Africa, which appears to be transmitted through routine contact between people. This variant has a fatality rate of about four percent. Given the risk, the World Health Organization has declared a global public health emergency for monkeypox.

"Exercising personal responsibility, especially when symptomatic, and practicing good personal hygiene remain effective at reducing the risk of transmission of mpox," said the Singapore Ministry of Health in a statement.

