Basics

- Zoonotic disease (transmitted to humans from animals). Affects all age groups.
- Transmission: respiratory droplets, skin-to-skin, fomites, direct contact or exposure to infected animal, consummation of infected meat. Not a sexually transmitted disease in the classic sense, but it is spread by close physical contact with lesions.
- The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks.

Symptoms

- Initial (prodromal) phase: fever, chills, drenching sweats, extreme weakness, muscle pain, backache, severe headache, dyspnea, cough, enlarged lymph nodes.
- Mouth sores, conjunctival, genital, or anal lesions.

Prevention strategies

- The initial phase is followed 1-10 days later by a facial rash (firm pimple-like lesions) that spreads to the rest of the body, including the palms and the soles (can start in genital and perianal areas). Person is contagious from the time initial symptoms start until the rash has fully healed (until lesions form scabs, scabs fall off, and a fresh layer of skin forms).
- Avoid (a) direct or indirect contact with body fluids or lesion materials (the infectious rash or scabs) of an infected person; (b) skin-to-skin contact; (c) exposure to respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact; (d) contact with fomites (objects such as shared towels and bedding which are likely to carry infection).
- Mostly mild, self-limiting disease; however, complications can include scarring, secondary bacterial infection, encephalitis, bronchopneumonia, respiratory distress, sepsis, corneal ulceration, keratitis, blindness.
- The prognosis depends on initial health status, and concurrent illnesses or comorbidities. If you are sick, isolate and decontaminate contaminated surfaces.