



Pictured: Spores/Arthroconidia

Valley Fever Awareness

- Knowledge of illness is important to avoid delays in treatment
- 40% develop an illness severe enough to seek medical attention
- Only 1 in 4 with infections are actually diagnosed
- 60% of people infected have no symptoms at all and get better on their own
- 1-3% of cases worsen and spread through blood to other body systems
- Recent data from Kern County Health Department is 2,959 people were infected last year
- There is no vaccination for Valley Fever

What is Valley Fever?

- A fungus that lives in the dirt in areas of Southwestern United States
- Becomes airborne when dirt is disturbed by wind, farming and construction
- Can be inhaled into the lungs
- Causes an illness that might seem like a cold or the flu

Who is at risk for Valley Fever?

- Anyone can get the illness
- Some people are more likely to suffer from severe illness
 - Adults over 60 years old
 - Infants younger than 1 year old
 - People of African American and Filipino descent
 - Pregnant women (especially in last trimester)
 - People with Diabetes
 - People with weakened immune systems caused by:
 - Cancer and Chemotherapy
 - HIV
 - Steroids
 - Organ transplant recipients
- People working in certain outdoor occupations
 - Archeological digging
 - Construction
 - Excavation

 **Valley Fever Institute**
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Valley Fever

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Clues that Valley Fever may be in the soil

- Lots of animal burrows
- Old (prehistoric) Indian Campsites
- Areas with sparse vegetation
- Areas adjacent to dry streams
- Debris piles constructed by rodents (packrat middens)
- Upper 12 inches of undisturbed soil
- Sandy well aerated soil with high water holding capacity

How to lower your risk for Valley Fever

- Avoid breathing in dirt or dust in areas where Valley Fever is more common
- Wet down dusty areas before working or playing in them
- During dust storms stay indoors with windows and doors closed
- Use recirculating air-conditioning in home and cars if possible
- If you must be outside in a dust storm wear a N95 face-mask

Symptoms of Valley Fever

- Can appear 1-3 weeks after exposure.
- Described as flu like.
 - Cough
 - Fever
 - Headache
 - Chills
 - Night sweats
 - Chest pain
 - Rash
 - Feeling very tired
 - Muscle and joint pains
 - Blood tinted mucus

Complications of Valley Fever

- Severe pneumonia.
- Cavities in lungs that cause pain and difficulty breathing.
- Skin ulcers
- Abscesses
- Bone lesions
- Inflammation of heart
- Joint pain
- Meningitis
- Urinary track problems

Types of Valley Fever

Acute

- Most people will have mild to no symptoms
- Normal recovery rate is 6 months
- For severe symptoms, recovery can take up to 1 year

Chronic Valley Fever

- Occurs more in those with weakened immune systems
- Symptoms are more severe and fluctuate by improving and worsening
- Happens when Acute Valley Fever Stage does not make a full recovery
- Condition progresses into chronic pneumonia

Disseminated Valley Fever

- Infection spreads from lungs through blood to other body systems
- Can affect skin, liver, brain, bones, meninges and heart
- Signs and symptoms vary according to body system affected
- Can be fatal without appropriate treatment

Treatment for Valley Fever

- Most people don't require treatment
- Only people with severe symptoms or at high risk are treated
- Oral Antifungal medications or Intravenous Amphotericin may be given