

Gila County
Health & Emergency Management

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

5515 South Apache Ave., Suite 400, Globe, AZ 85501

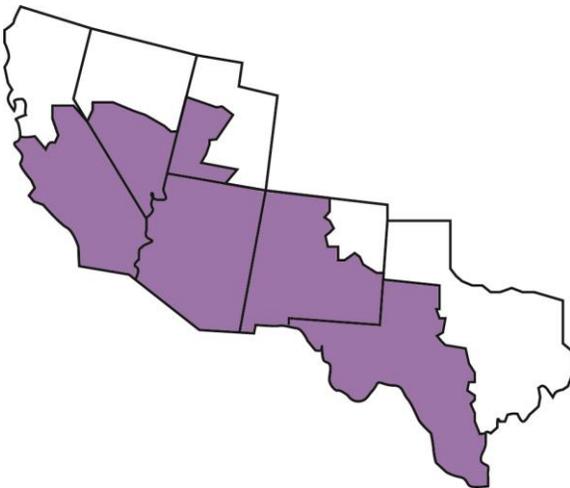
PHONE: (928) 402-8811

Coccidioidomycosis (Valley Fever) Fact Sheet

Background

Valley Fever is an infection of the lungs caused by a fungus from soil in portions of California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah. Valley Fever is also found in parts of Mexico, Central, and South America.

States Where Valley Fever is Common



Symptoms

Most cases (60%) have no symptoms or very mild flu-like symptoms and do not seek medical treatment. The most common symptoms are fatigue, cough, fever, night sweats, loss of appetite, chest pain, muscle and joint aches (particularly in the ankles and knees). A rash that resembles measles or hives may develop, but more often appears as tender red bumps on the shins or forearms.

Patients with chronic Valley Fever have long-lasting symptoms including low-grade fever, weight loss, cough, chest pain, and coughing up blood. These symptoms are often slow to appear and may resemble tuberculosis when coupled with x-ray examination.

Transmission

Valley Fever is acquired by breathing in airborne spores of the fungus *Coccidioides*. The spores are carried in dust

particles by the wind when the desert soil is disturbed. The spores change form in the body and are not contagious. Valley Fever is not spread from human to human, animal to animal, animal to human, or human to animal.

Prevention

Stay indoors during dust storms. Persons with weakened immune systems should wear an N95 respirator mask if they are involved in activities that involve a lot of dust (such as gardening, digging, or landscaping).

Treatment

Most people with Valley Fever recover without treatment. Experts are unsure whether antifungal treatment speeds up recovery or prevents complications. Talk to your doctor about whether or not you need treatment. Doctors usually evaluate the progress of a patient through chest x-rays, blood tests, and monitoring the severity and duration of symptoms. This may require frequent visits to the doctor. If weight loss and night sweats continue, damaged areas of the lungs spread, or the patient is unable to perform daily functions, treatment with antifungal medication is usually recommended. In rare cases, surgery may be required. Antibiotics have no effect on the fungus.

Immunity

Usually lifetime immunity is acquired after an infection, this means that you will probably not get Valley Fever again. Sometimes, however, changes in a person's immune system brought about by other diseases or treatments leave a person vulnerable to reinfection.

For more information

If you need more information, please contact your primary care physician or Gila County Division of Health & Emergency Management at (928) 402-8811.