



HISTOPLASMOSIS

What is histoplasmosis?

Histoplasmosis is an infection caused by the fungus *Histoplasma*. The fungus lives in the environment, particularly in soil that contains large amounts of bird or bat droppings. In the United States, *Histoplasma* mainly lives in soil in the central and eastern states, especially areas around the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys.

Who gets histoplasmosis?

Anyone can get histoplasmosis. Individuals with weakened immune systems are at greater risk at getting histoplasmosis.

How is histoplasmosis spread?

Histoplasmosis is transmitted by breathing in the microscopic fungal spores from the air, often after participating in activities that disturb the soil.

What are the symptoms of histoplasmosis?

Most people exposed to *Histoplasma* never have symptoms and other may experience symptoms that go away on their own. Symptoms can include fever (100 degrees F or higher; 37.8 degrees C), cough, fatigue, chills, headache, chest pain, and body aches.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms of histoplasmosis may appear between three to 17 days after inhaling the fungal spores.

Should an infected person be excluded from work or school?

Exclusion is not necessary as there is no person-to-person transmission.

What is the treatment for histoplasmosis?

For some people, symptoms will go away without treatment. However, prescription antifungal medication is needed to treat severe histoplasmosis in the lungs, chronic histoplasmosis, and infections that spread from the lungs to other parts of the body.

What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of histoplasmosis?

In areas where *Histoplasma* is known to live, people with weakened immune systems should avoid the following activities: disturbing material where there are bird or bat droppings; cleaning chicken coops; exploring caves; and cleaning, remodeling, or tearing down old buildings.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
<https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/histoplasmosis/index.html>