Is Valley Fever contagious?

No, Valley Fever is not spread from person to person, and you cannot catch it from your pets.

How is Valley Fever treated?

Most patients with Valley Fever recover with no treatment, and will have life-long immunity. For persistent symptoms, an antifungal drug is often prescribed. In severe cases, years of anti-fungal treatment may be required, and surgery may be necessary to remove damaged tissue.

How is Valley Fever diagnosed?

Blood testing for the cocci antibody and sputum testing for presence of cocci organisms are considered reliable only after three weeks or more from the onset of symptoms. Chest x-rays may show lung abnormalities associated with Cocci. Your doctor can order a test of blood or other bodily fluids. The specimen should be sent to either:

Coccidioidomycosis Serology Laboratory
School of Medicine
UC Davis
Davis, California 95616

Kern County Public Health Laboratory
1800 Mount Vernon Ave
Bakersfield, CA 93306

Protect yourself

Use caution when conducting activities associated with dust and airborne dirt. There is no vaccine available at this time, although research is being conducted. If you have a condition that weakens your immune system, consider avoiding high-risk activities associated with disturbing dirt, especially on windy days.

For more information on Valley Fever, contact:

San Luis Obispo County
Public Health Department
(805) 781-5500
http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/health/publichealth/commdisease.htm

Valley Fever Center of Excellence
Tucson, Arizona 85724
(520) 626-6517
http://www.vfce.arizona.edu

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/coccidioidomycosis/

California Department of Public Health
http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/Pages/Coccidioidomycosis.aspx

American Lung Association
http://www.lungusa.org/lung-disease/coccidiodomycosis/

National Institutes of Health (NIH)
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002299/

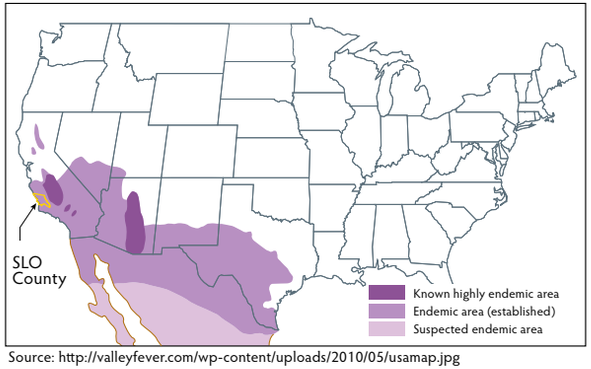
San Luis Obispo County
Public Health Department

What is Valley Fever?

Valley Fever (Coccidioidomycosis or "cocci") is a disease caused by the spores of a fungus (Coccidioides) that can infect lungs, and in some cases spread to other parts of the body…

...more about Valley Fever

Valley Fever (Coccidioidomycosis or "cocci"), is a disease caused by the spores of a fungus (Coccidioides) that lives in soil in the southwest region of the United States, Mexico, Central and South America. When soils where the fungus lives are disturbed by wind, construction, farming, grading, digging or earthquakes, fungal spores can become airborne. Cocci is present in San Luis Obispo County, and infection can occur year-round. Once inhaled, the spores make their way into the tiny air sacs deep in the lungs. There the spores can then infect lungs, and in some cases spread to other parts of the body. In less than 1% of cases, the disease can be fatal.



Source: http://valleyfever.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/usamap.jpg

How common is Valley Fever in San Luis Obispo County?

Between the years 2000 and 2007, San Luis Obispo Public Health Department confirmed 686 cases of Valley Fever. A map depicting this information is available on the County Health Department's website. The Public Health Department tracks these cases through reporting by medical providers, and in turn, keeps local medical providers apprised of any new or relevant information on the incidence, detection and treatment of this disease.

Who gets Valley Fever?

The disease may occur in anyone who lives, works, or visits an area where Valley Fever occurs. People most likely to be exposed are those who are in dusty occupations such as farm workers, construction workers, and archaeologists. Recreational activities in affected areas, such as off-road biking, 4-wheeling and driving ATVs can increase the risk of exposure. Domestic and wild animals are also susceptible to infection. Over 60% of infected people either have no symptoms, or experience flu-like symptoms. Of the 30 to 40% who develop symptoms, most will experience a sudden onset of mild to severe flu-like symptoms, and will recover without treatment.

A small percentage—between 1 and 5 percent—of those who experience symptoms will develop the much more serious disseminated form of the disease. This form occurs more often in persons with immune system deficiencies, such as those infected with HIV/AIDS, women who are pregnant, persons on chronic corticosteroid therapy, persons on chemotherapy, and dark-skinned patients – those of Hispanic, African American, Native American, and Filipino descent.

What should I do if I think I have been exposed and become sick?

If you suspect that you may have been exposed to Valley Fever and are experiencing flu-like symptoms that have not improved over several weeks, you should go to your local health care provider, Urgent Care clinic, or hospital for evaluation and testing for Valley Fever. Be sure to inform your health care provider that you may have been exposed to Valley Fever.

What are the symptoms of Valley Fever?

The disease may not produce any symptoms at all, or flu-like symptoms may occur within one to three weeks after exposure.

Exposure symptoms can include:

- fever
- coughing
- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- body aches and joint pain
- skin rash
- night sweats
- fatigue

For most people, symptoms disappear on their own within a month or so, although full return of energy may take up to six months.

Some persons develop disseminated disease, which can be potentially fatal. The disseminated form of the disease occurs when the fungal infection spreads to other parts of the body.

Disseminated symptoms can include:

- very high fever
- extreme fatigue
- nodules or ulcers on the skin
- painful lesions on the skull, spine, or other bones
- painful, swollen joints
- headaches and or back pain from infection of the brain or spinal cord