

Histoplasmosis Information

Reno County has seen a couple of Histoplasmosis cases this year already, so we wanted to send out some information about the disease and how to prevent it. This is especially important due to the current season, where many individuals are landscaping and the weather being dry and windy.

What is histoplasmosis?

Histoplasmosis is fungal infection that occurs when breathing in spores from a fungus called *Histoplasma*. This fungus is found in the environment, especially in the soil with large amounts of bird or bat droppings. Unfortunately, this fungus is found in the soil in Reno County, which means anyone in the county can be exposed.

Risk factors

Anyone can get histoplasmosis. Groups that are at higher risk for severe histoplasmosis include:

- People with weakened immune systems, some of which include:
 - Having HIV/AIDS
 - Having had an organ transplant
 - Are taking certain medications, such as corticosteroids
- Infants
- Adults aged 55 and older

What are the symptoms?

Most people who are exposed to the fungus do not have symptoms. If symptoms occur, they are generally flu-like symptoms, with fever, cough, fatigue, and body aches. These symptoms may go away on their own but can develop into a long-term infection and spread to other parts of the body. Severe cases can lead to hospitalization and death.

Is it contagious?

No, histoplasmosis can't spread from the lungs of an infected person to anyone else.

Prevention

- Avoid certain activities. Avoid projects and activities that can expose you to it, such as cleaning barns or raising birds, especially if you're at higher risk for disease.
- Water down the area before you work. Before you dig into soil that can contain the fungus, soak it with water. This can help prevent the spores from being released into the air.
- Wear a mask. Consider wearing a mask, such as an N95, while participating in high-risk activities.

For more information

Visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/histoplasmosis/definition.html>