

FACT SHEET

Histoplasmosis

Histoplasmosis is caused by a fungus called *Histoplasma Capsulatum*. This disease primarily affects the lungs.

Symptoms: Some infected persons have no apparent ill effects. Symptoms in acute respiratory disease include fever, chest pains, and a dry nonproductive cough. Distinct patterns may be seen on a chest x-ray.

Spread: *Histoplasmosis Capsulatum* grows in the soil and material contaminated with bat or bird droppings. *Histoplasmosis* spores become airbourne when contaminated soil is disturbed. Breathing the spores causes the infection. The disease is not transmitted person to person.

Incubation: If symptomatic, the symptoms usually begin 3 to 17 days after exposure to the fungus.

Contagious Period: An infected person is not contagious to others.

Precautions: Chronic lung disease can worsen over months or years.

Reportable: Within seven days by the Provider or Laboratory to the state or local health department.

Diagnosis and Treatment:

The physician will probably order a chest x-ray, blood tests, possibly a urine test, and/or a skin test. Antifungal medications are used to treat severe cases of acute histoplasmosis and all cases of chronic and disseminated disease. Mild disease usually resolves without treatment.

Prevention: The best way to prevent the spread *Histoplasmosis* is:

- Avoid areas that may harbor the fungus, e.g., accumulations of bird or bat droppings.
- Before starting a job or activity having a risk for exposure to *H.capsulatum*, consult the NIOSH/NCID document **Histoplasmosis: Protecting Workers at Risk**. A copy of this document may be obtained by requesting publication no. 2005-109 from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. You can also request additional information by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO.