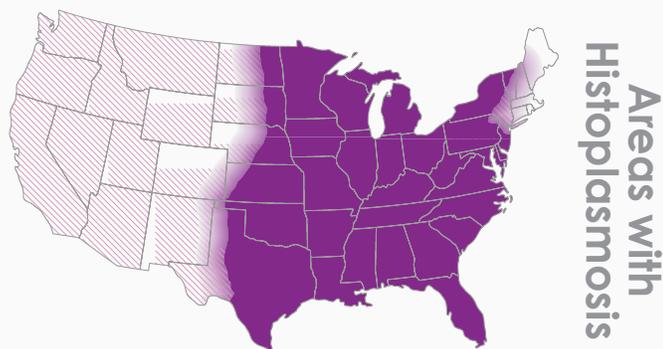


What Workers Should Know about Histoplasmosis

What is histoplasmosis?

Histoplasmosis is an infection caused by a fungus called *Histoplasma capsulatum*. The fungus lives in the environment, particularly soil that contains large amounts of bird or bat droppings. People can get histoplasmosis after breathing in the very small fungal spores (also known as conidia) from the air. In the United States, *Histoplasma* mainly lives in the central and eastern states, particularly areas around the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys.



This map of the United States shows CDC's current estimate of where the fungi that cause histoplasmosis lives in the environment. Darker shading shows areas where Histoplasma is more likely to live and diagonal shading shows the potential range of Histoplasma. These fungi are not distributed evenly in the shaded areas, might not be present everywhere in the shaded areas, and can also be outside of the shaded areas.

What are the symptoms of histoplasmosis?

Most people who breathe in spores don't get sick, but those who do may have a fever, cough, and fatigue. Symptoms usually appear between 3 and 17 days after a person breathes in the fungal spores. In some people, the infection can become severe and spread from the lungs to other parts of the body. This is more common in people with weakened immune systems or other medical conditions.

Some activities have risks for exposure to *Histoplasma*



Disturbance of large accumulations of bird or bat droppings (scraping droppings from a bridge, shoveling droppings from a building, cleaning a chicken coop)



Soil disruption (digging or excavation)



Plant matter disruption (handling trees, landscaping)



Demolition, construction, or renovation



Working in caves



In areas where *Histoplasma* is common, you may have a higher chance of getting histoplasmosis if you work in:

- Construction and demolition
- Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction
- Agriculture and forestry
- Any jobs that involve activities listed on page 1

Protect yourself from histoplasmosis

The best way to prevent exposure to *Histoplasma* is to prevent the accumulation of bird or bat droppings in the first place. This can be accomplished by excluding bats and birds from buildings. If you must remove accumulations of bat or bird droppings or if you are doing construction, excavation, or demolition in areas where *Histoplasma* is common, try to eliminate or reduce dust. For example, spray water or use other dust suppression techniques.



Personal protective equipment (PPE) may also help protect you from *Histoplasma*. Disposable protective clothing and shoe coverings can help prevent spreading spores to other places like your car or home. Talk to your crew leader or supervisor about selecting the appropriate PPE.

If you think that you have been exposed to *Histoplasma* at work or have symptoms of histoplasmosis:

- Contact your crew leader or supervisor and your Occupational Health or Risk Management Department
- Contact your local city, country, or state health department if your workplace does not have the above services
- Seek a medical evaluation by a healthcare provider
- Talk to your healthcare provider about testing for histoplasmosis

For more information on histoplasmosis and how to protect yourself, please visit:

CDC's histoplasmosis website: <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/histoplasmosis/>

CDC/NIOSH's histoplasmosis website: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/histoplasmosis/>

Find NIOSH products and get answers to workplace safety and health questions:

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-888-232-6348

CDC/NIOSH INFO: [cdc.gov/info/](https://www.cdc.gov/info/) | [cdc.gov/niosh/](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/)

Monthly NIOSH eNews: [cdc.gov/niosh/eNews/](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/eNews/)

DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2022-104

DOI Number: <https://doi.org/10.26616/NIOSH PUB2022104>

December 2021