



# News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 25, 2019

PH19-032

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## Valley Fever Cases in California Remain High

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Public Health (CDPH), in collaboration with local health departments, is reminding the public and healthcare providers that Valley fever cases typically peak in the fall.

Since 2014, there has been a steady increase in the number of Valley fever cases in California. In 2018, more than 7,500 Valley fever cases were confirmed, and early case counts for 2019 indicate that Valley fever activity remains high. As of November 19, over 7,000 likely cases have been reported. Incidence is particularly high in the Central Valley and Central Coast regions of California, including Kern, San Luis Obispo, Kings, Fresno, Tulare, Monterey, and Merced counties.

“People who live, work, or travel in areas where Valley fever is common are at higher risk of getting infected, especially if they work outdoors or participate in activities where soil is disturbed,” said Dr. Sonia Angell, State Public Health Officer and CDPH Director. “If you have symptoms that include cough, fever, or difficulty breathing for more than a week, we encourage you to talk to a healthcare provider.”

A person can help reduce the risk of infection by avoiding breathing in dirt or dust in areas where Valley fever is common. In these areas, when it is windy outside and the air is dusty, stay inside and keep windows and doors closed. While driving, keep car windows closed and use recirculating air conditioning, if available. If individuals must be outdoors, they should consider wearing a properly fitted mask (such as an N95 respirator mask) when the air is dusty, and avoid disturbing the soil whenever possible.

Valley fever, also known as coccidioidomycosis, or “cocci”, is caused by breathing in the spores of a fungus that grows in the soil and dirt in certain areas of California. The fungal spores, which are too small to see, can be present in dust that gets into the air when it is windy or when soil is disturbed, such as through digging during construction. This fungus usually infects the lungs and can cause respiratory symptoms including cough, fever, chest pain, and tiredness. In most people, the infection will go away on its own, but anyone who has these symptoms for more than a week should see a doctor or healthcare provider.

While anyone can get Valley fever, those most at-risk for severe disease include people 60 years or older, people who are African American or Filipino, pregnant women, and people with diabetes or conditions that weaken the immune system.

Employers with employees working outdoors should train workers about Valley fever symptoms and take steps to limit workers' exposure to dust, such as watering down soil before digging.

The State of California is taking action to raise awareness about Valley fever by allocating \$2 million in the 2018-2019 budget to plan, develop, launch and evaluate a Valley Fever Awareness campaign that CDPH will launch in the coming months. [Governor Gavin Newsom has also approved a bill](#) to require construction employers engaging in specific work activities in counties where Valley fever is endemic to provide awareness training about Valley fever to their employees.

For additional information on Valley fever, please visit [CDPH's Valley fever website](#). For more information on N95 masks, please visit this [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website](#).

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