

What is Histoplasmosis?

- * Histoplasmosis is a type of lung infection.
- * It is caused by inhaling *Histoplasma capsulatum* fungal spores.
- * These spores are bat droppings of bats and birds.
- * This fungus mainly grows in the central, southeastern, and mid Atlantic states.

What should I watch for?

- * Most people who are infected with this fungus have no symptoms. However the risk of symptoms increases as you breathe in more spores.

Possible symptoms include:

- * fever
 - * dry cough
 - * chest pain
 - * joint pain
 - * red bumps on your lower legs
- In severe cases symptoms may include
- * excessive sweating
 - * shortness of breath
 - * coughing up blood

What causes it?



* fungal spores can be released into the air when contaminated soil or droppings are disturbed.

* Breathing the spores may lead to an infection

The spores that cause this condition are commonly found in places where birds and bats have roosted such as:

- * caves
- * chicken coops
- * parks
- * older barns

Types of Histoplasmosis

Acute

* Acute or short-term histoplasmosis is typically mild.

* It rarely leads to complications

* The centers for disease control and prevention (CDC) estimate that 11% of people who live in areas where the fungus is common have been exposed.

* Many of these people probably did not have any symptoms of infection.

Chronic

* Chronic or long-term histoplasmosis occurs far less often than the acute form.

* In rare cases it can spread throughout the body.

Am I at Risk?

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* There are two major risk factors
for developing this disease. The first is
working in a high-risk occupation and the
second

occupations

* you are more likely to be
exposed to histoplasmosis if your
job exposes

* disturbed soil or animal droppings.
High-risk jobs include.

- * construction worker
- * farmer
- * pest control worker
- * demolition worker
- * roofer
- * landscaper

weakened immune systems

* Many people who have been
exposed to histoplasmosis do not get
noticeably sick.

* conditions associated with
weakened immunity include:

- * being very young or very old
- * having HIV or AIDS
- * taking strong anti-inflammatory
medications like corticosteroids.
- * undergoing chemotherapy for cancer.
- * taking TNF inhibitors for conditions
such as rheumatoid arthritis
- * taking immunosuppressant drugs
to prevent a transplant rejection



Heart function issues

- * your heart might not be able to function normally.
- * area around it becomes inflamed and full of fluid.

Meningitis

- * Histoplasmosis can cause a serious condition called meningitis.
- * Meningitis occurs when the membranes surrounding your brain and spinal

Adrenal glands and hormone problems

- * Infection can damage your adrenal glands and this may cause problems with hormone production

Treatments for Histoplasmosis

- * If you have a mild infection you probably won't need treatment.
- * you will likely be given an oral antifungal medication.

- * Itraconazole
- * amphotericin B
- * Fluconazole

How can I prevent Histoplasmosis?

- * you can reduce your risk of infection by avoiding high-risk areas
 - * construction sites
 - * renovated buildings
 - * caves
 - * pigeon or chicken coops