Date:

Contact: Name | Number | Email

# Community Leaders Urge the Public to Be Aware of Valley Fever

## Valley fever is still a problem in California

COUNTY or CITY – [Partner/Local Agency Name], in collaboration with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and other local agencies, is reminding residents that Valley fever is still a problem here in our county.

Since 2014, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Valley fever cases in California. Incidence is particularly high in the Central Valley and Central Coast regions of California, including Kern, Kings, San Luis Obispo, Fresno, Tulare, Madera, and Monterey counties. Increasingly more cases have been reported in Central and Southern California as well.

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 some 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 when digging during construction. This fungus usually infects the lungs and can cause respiratory symptoms including cough, fever, chest pain, and fatigue or tiredness.

While Valley fever and COVID-19 share many of the same symptoms, Valley fever symptoms can last a month or more, but laboratory tests are needed to know whether symptoms are caused by COVID-19 or Valley fever. If a person tests negative for COVID-19 but has lingering respiratory symptoms that last more than a week, they should talk to a doctor and ask if their symptoms could be Valley fever.

[Quote From Public Health Official] “With the continued increase in Valley fever cases, people living, working, or traveling in the Central Valley and Central Coast regions of California should take steps to avoid breathing in dusty air outside," said Dr. Erica Pan, CDPH Acting State Public Health Officer. “Although the symptoms of Valley fever can be similar to those of COVID-19, it’s important that individuals with lingering cough and fatigue also talk to a healthcare provider about Valley fever, especially if they have been outdoors in dusty air. People who work primarily outdoors, such as construction workers and others that dig or disturb soil, should learn more about symptoms and ways to prevent Valley fever infection.”

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

A person can reduce their risk of Valley fever by taking steps to avoid breathing in dust in areas where Valley fever is common:

* When it is windy outside and the air is dusty, stay indoors and keep windows and doors closed.
* While driving, keep car windows closed and use recirculating air conditioning, if available.
* If individuals must be outdoors in dusty areas, they should consider wearing a properly fitted N95 mask.

[Partner/Local Agency] encourages people who live, work, or visit in areas where Valley fever is common to learn about the signs and symptoms of Valley fever and the ways to help reduce the risk of infection. 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.

For additional information on Valley fever, please visit CDPH’s Valley fever website, [www.CouldBeValleyFever.org](http://www.couldbevalleyfever.org/).

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