

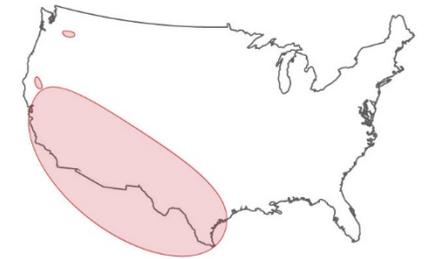


Valley Fever

Objective: To increase awareness of Valley Fever, also known as California Fever, its symptoms, risk factors, and how to reduce exposure in the workplace.

Valley Fever, also called California Fever and coccidioidomycosis (kok-sid-e-oy-doh-my-KOH-sis), is a type of fungal infection. It most commonly affects people living, working, or visiting the southwestern United States and parts of Mexico, Central America, and South America. Southern Arizona and the Central Valley and Central Coast in California have the greatest concentration of cases.

Areas Endemic for Coccidioidomycosis



California enacted [AB 203](#) requiring construction employers doing certain types of work and vehicle operation in endemic counties (greater than 20 cases per 100,000 persons per year) in the state to provide training and take other measures to protect employees' health. These employers must provide employees with **training on this topic every year** before they begin dust-disturbing projects. Employers can cover Valley Fever separately or as part of their injury and illness prevention training.

Known Endemic California Counties	Applicable Construction Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresno • Kern • Kings • Madera • Merced • Monterey • San Joaquin • San Luis Obispo • Santa Barbara • Tulare • Ventura 	<p>Constructing, altering, painting, repairing, maintaining, removing, or wrecking a fixed structure.</p> <p>Digging, grading, driving, earth moving operations, and high wind conditions.</p>

Other types of employers located in the regions highlighted above can also benefit from this training. For additional training resources, please visit the [California Department of Public Health](#).

What is Valley Fever?

Valley Fever is a type of fungal infection caused by inhaling *Coccidioides* (kok-sid-e-OY-deze) spores.

This factsheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.

For additional information on this topic, please contact ACWA JPIA Risk Control Department, Terry Lofing, Administrative Assistant III (tlofing@acwajpia.com) or 800-231-5742.

How is it Contracted?

Work activities may disturb the soil that the *Coccidioides* fungus lives in. When people breathe in the dust these activities produce, it may lead to Valley Fever exposure. Conditions that increase exposure include the following:

- Driving or operating equipment on dirt roads
- Digging, grading, excavation, or earth moving activities
- Construction
- Mining, quarrying, or gas and oil extraction
- Wildland firefighting
- Agricultural work

Natural activities, such as high winds, may also disturb soil and transfer spores.

Risk Factors

Aspects of people's personal health may increase their risk for Valley Fever. Higher risk factors include, but are not limited to:

- Pregnancy
- Diabetes
- A compromised immune system due to, but not limited to:
 - Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
 - Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)
 - Recent organ transplant
 - Taking immunosuppressant drugs, such as corticosteroids or tumor necrosis factor inhibitors

How to Recognize Signs and Symptoms

Valley Fever symptoms may begin 1 – 3 weeks after breathing in the *Coccidioides* fungal spores.

Symptoms of valley fever are generally respiratory-related or flu-like and include:

- Cough
- Fever
- Chest pain
- Tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Headache
- Muscle aches or joint pain
- Rash on upper body or legs

Valley fever isn't contagious — it can't be spread from person to person. It is almost always caused by breathing in microscopic fungal spores from dust in the air.

Importance of Early Detection, Diagnosis and Treatment

If you experience Valley Fever symptoms for an extended period of time and have been working in an area where there was substantial and visible dust in the air for 1 hour or more per day, report it to your employer. You should also seek medical attention for appropriate diagnosis and treatment.

Doctors can use a blood test and other laboratory tests to diagnose Valley Fever.

If antifungal medication is needed for Valley Fever, it is most effective during the early stages of the illness.

Common Treatment Options and Prognosis

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most people who breathe in *Coccidioides* spores don't get sick and those who do tend to get better on their own.

- Usually, symptoms of valley fever go away within a few weeks or months without medical treatment. Some symptoms, particularly fatigue, may take longer to go away and may last months.
- Some people will need antifungal medication prescribed by a doctor for the best prognosis. These medications can reduce the severity of symptoms for those at a higher risk of developing more serious complications. Not everyone with Valley Fever needs to take these medications.
- Valley Fever can cause severe lung infections or even skin, bone, joint, or brain infections.
- In very rare cases, it can be serious or fatal.

Safe Work Practices

Personal and environmental exposure prevention methods may include, but are not limited to:

- Use water-based dust suppression.
- Practice good hygiene when your skin and clothing are covered in dust.
 - Keep your work clothes and your street clothes separate. Never take contaminated clothing home.
 - Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds before eating, drinking, or touching your face.
- Limit contamination of drinks and food.
- Work upwind from dusty areas when feasible.
- Wet-cleaning dusty equipment, if possible.
- Wear a N95 mask or respirator when exposure to dust cannot be avoided.
 - Complete all training. If applicable, follow your respiratory protection program.
- While driving, keep vehicle windows shut and use “recirculating” air, if available.
- Your employer has additional responsibilities to keep you safe, such as performing a hazard assessment and providing personal protective equipment.

Valley Fever

This form documents that the training specified above was presented to the listed participants. By signing below, each participant acknowledges receiving this training.

Organization: _____ Date: _____

Trainer: _____ Trainer's Signature: _____

Class Participants:

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____