

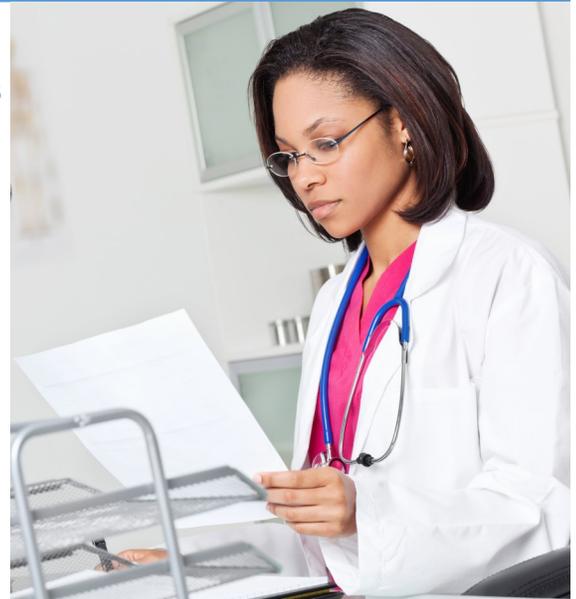
# Valley fever now in Washington State

## *Information for Clinicians*

Valley fever (coccidioidomycosis) is a disease caused by infection with the *Coccidioides* fungus. [The \*Coccidioides\* fungus](#) has been found in soil in south-central Washington and locally acquired cases of coccidioidomycosis have been reported to the Washington State Department of Health.

The *Coccidioides* fungus has long been known to grow in the semi-arid soils of the south-western United States, Mexico, and parts of Central and South America. In Washington, the extent of the fungus' geographic range is not currently known.

Coccidioidomycosis symptoms may include a pneumonia or flu-like illness with fever, cough, headache, rash, extreme fatigue, or muscle aches. Disease presentation varies and may be severe, including dissemination throughout the body.



Valley fever now possible in Washington

### Workers at risk:

People who work in dusty earthen environments are at increased risk for breathing in the *Coccidioides* fungal spores that arise from soil or dust. Coccidioidomycosis has been acquired by people working directly in dusty environments, but also from working adjacent to dusty environments. Dusty industries and jobs to watch for include:

- Agriculture
- Construction
- Mining
- Landscaping
- Archeological and Geological
- Military personnel
- Wildland firefighters

Work-related coccidioidomycosis clusters have occurred in California among construction workers engaged in trench digging and solar power farm construction, during outdoor television filming, and in state prison workers and inmates.

### Reportable in Washington State

Coccidioidomycosis was made [reportable](#) as a rare disease of public health significance to the Washington State Department of Health in 2014.<sup>1</sup>

A total of 9 cases with exposure in south-central Washington have been reported to public health from 2010 to 2014.<sup>2</sup> Prior to 2014, up to six out-of-state travel-associated cases were reported each year. In 2015, twenty-five cases, all travel-associated, were reported.

As of 2017, two Washington workers are known to have acquired work-related coccidioidomycosis.

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# Worker Stories

## Agricultural worker infected by Valley fever while working outdoors

A male agricultural worker in his 30's contracted Valley fever in 2014 while working in the ground planting and moving soil. The fungal infection disseminated throughout his body and ultimately involved the lungs, skin, and other organs. Laboratory testing of the workplace soil confirmed the presence of *Coccidioides* fungus. Because returning to agricultural work would have meant continued exposure to the fungus, the injured worker underwent vocational retraining.

## Construction manager infected while working in California

A male construction worker in his 50's from Washington State developed Valley fever in 2016 while on assignment in California. He was exposed to *Coccidioides* spores as supervisor responsible for construction permitting, excavation, site preparation and building. He received time loss payments as a result of his pneumonia. He improved with antifungal treatment and returned to work.

## Resources for clinicians

Free CME course! [Coccidioidomycosis Occupational Health Issues](#) is a course for primary care providers that provides US case statistics, diagnostic and treatment information, and highlights on the occupations, activities, and workplace studies concerning coccidioidomycosis. Sponsored by the California Department of Public Health, Occupational Health Branch. (cmecalifornia.com, search 'cocci').

[Coccidioidomycosis \(Valley Fever\)](#) – Washington State Department of Health webpage. Includes reporting and surveillance information, fact sheets, and guidelines for clinicians. (doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/NotifiableConditions/Coccidioidomycosis)

[Preventing Work-related Valley Fever](#) – California Department of Public Health web page. Includes links to prevention materials and journal abstracts, (cdph.ca.gov/programs/ohb/Pages/Cocci.aspx).

[Coccidioidomycosis](#) – National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health webpage. Includes occupational prevention resources. (cdc.gov/niosh/topics/valleyfever).

[Occupational Respiratory Disease](#) – SHARP Program, Washington State Department of Labor & Industries web page. Includes prevention materials for employers, workers (Spanish), and clinicians. (Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/OccHealth/Asthma/default.asp)

[Valley Fever Center for Excellence](#) – University of Arizona educational resource for the public and healthcare providers. (vfce.arizona.edu)

## References

<sup>1</sup> List of Notifiable Conditions, Coccidioidomycosis – Washington State Department of Health (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/NotifiableConditions/ListofNotifiableConditions>)

<sup>2</sup> Washington State Communicable Disease Report 2015, Washington State Department of Health. DOH 420-004. (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/DataandStatisticalReports/DiseasesandChronicConditions/CommunicableDiseaseSurveillanceData/AnnualCDSurveillanceReports>)

For more information, contact the Safety and Health Assessment & Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program at the WA State Department of Labor and Industries at [Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/OccHealth/Asthma/default.asp](mailto:SHARP@Lni.wa.gov), [SHARP@Lni.wa.gov](mailto:SHARP@Lni.wa.gov) or toll free at 1-888-667-4277.

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