



## Fungal Diseases

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# Fungal Infections: Protect Your Health

Here are 10 questions you can use to understand fungal infections and know what you need to do to stay healthy.

**Fungi** are everywhere. Sometimes, they are too small to see with the naked eye. Fungi can live outdoors in soil and on plants, indoors on surfaces and in the air, and on people's skin and inside the body. There are millions of fungal species, but only a few hundred of them can make people sick.

Mild fungal skin infections can look like a rash and are very common. For example, **ringworm** is a skin infection caused by a fungus—not a worm. Fungal infections in the lungs can be more serious and often cause symptoms that are similar to other illnesses, such as bacterial pneumonia or tuberculosis. Finding the correct diagnosis can be difficult and cause delays in getting the right treatment. **Fungal infections like meningitis** and bloodstream infections are less common than skin and lung infections but can be life-threatening.



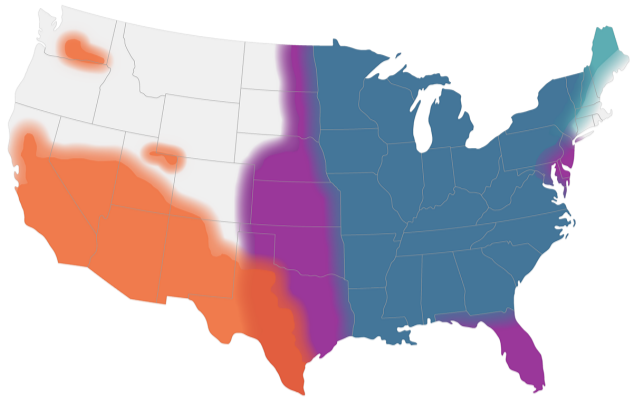
The more you know about fungal infections and your chances of getting one, the better you can protect your health.

## Find Out If You're At Risk Of Getting A Fungal Infection

- 1. Where do you live and travel?** Fungi that can cause infections are more common in some parts of the United States and world. For example, in the United States, the fungus that causes **Valley fever** is found mainly in the Southwest and parts of the Pacific Northwest. **Histoplasmosis** and **blastomycosis** occur most often in the eastern United States.
- 2. What types of activities are you doing?** Harmful fungi can be found in air, dust, and soil. You could inhale fungi during activities like digging, gardening, cleaning chicken coops, and visiting caves. **Histoplasma** grows especially well in soil that contains bird or bat droppings.
- 3. Do you have a dog or cat?** People can get some fungal infections from **their pets**, including **ringworm**, which causes skin rashes. In South America, people can get infections from a fungus called **Sporothrix brasiliensis** from cats, and this fungus might arrive in the United States. If you think your pet might be sick, talk to your veterinarian.
- 4. Have you recently taken antibiotics?** Antibiotics can make women more likely to get a vaginal yeast infection, also known as **vulvovaginal candidiasis**. Women who are pregnant or those who have weakened immune systems also are more likely to get this condition. Men also can get genital candidiasis.
- 5. Are you taking any medicine that affects your immune system?** **Medicine** that weakens your immune system, like steroids, biologics, or chemotherapy, may increase the chance of getting a fungal infection.
- 6. Are you receiving chemotherapy or radiation treatments?** Cancer treatment, such as chemotherapy and radiation, weakens your immune system. These treatments may increase the chance you will get a fungal infection.
- 7. Are you living with HIV?** People living with HIV (particularly those with CD4 counts less than 200) may be more likely to get fungal infections. Two well-known fungal infections associated with HIV in the United States are **oral candidiasis** (thrush) and **Pneumocystis pneumonia**. Worldwide, **cryptococcal meningitis** and **histoplasmosis** are major causes of illness in people living with HIV.
- 8. Are you going to be hospitalized?** In the United States, one of the most common bloodstream infections acquired in the hospital is caused by a fungus called **Candida**. **Candida** normally lives in the gastrointestinal tract and on skin without causing any problems, but it can enter the bloodstream and cause infection. A type of **Candida** called **Candida auris** is often resistant to antifungal medicines and can spread between patients in healthcare settings.
- 9. Have you recently had a transplant?** People who recently had an **organ transplant** or a **stem cell transplant** have weakened immune systems. That means they have a greater chance of developing a fungal infection. Doctors prescribe antifungal medicine for some transplant patients to prevent fungal infections.

10. **Do you have symptoms of pneumonia that are not getting better with antibiotics?** Fungal infections, especially lung infections like [Valley fever](#), [histoplasmosis](#), and [blastomycosis](#), can have similar symptoms as bacterial infections. However, antibiotics don't work for fungal infections. Early testing for fungal infections reduces unnecessary antibiotic use and allows people to start treatment with antifungal medicine, if necessary.

Anyone can get a fungal infection, even people who are otherwise healthy. People breathe in or come in contact with fungal spores every day without getting sick. However, in people with weakened immune systems, these fungi are more likely to cause an infection. To learn more about the signs, symptoms, and treatment of fungal infections and get prevention tips, visit [CDC's fungal diseases website](#) and talk with your healthcare provider.



### Estimated Areas With Blastomycosis, Valley Fever (Coccidioidomycosis), and Histoplasmosis

This map shows CDC's current estimates of where the fungi that cause blastomycosis (blue), Valley fever (orange), and histoplasmosis (purple) live in the environment in the United States. These fungi are not distributed evenly in the shaded areas, might not be present everywhere in the shaded areas, and can also be outside the shaded areas.

#### More Information

- [Types of Fungal Diseases](#)
- [Who Gets Fungal Infections?](#)
- [Healthcare-associated Infections](#)

#### Fungal Disease Awareness Week



Join CDC in sharing information to increase awareness in your community about fungal diseases during [Fungal Disease Awareness Week](#), September 18–22, 2023.

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