

Valley Fever Cases Reach Record High in California in 2019

by **California Department of Public Health (CDPH)**

December 2, 2020

advertisement

California Organics

Assist Customers with deli foods, make sandwiches, and prep deli items. Part time, 24-30 hours per week including weekends and evenings. Responsibilities include: -Breaking down poultry, Grinding beef, Sausage making, Brining and

SACRAMENTO December 2, 2020 – The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) today announced 9,004 reported new cases of Valley fever in California in 2019, the highest number since the state started tracking cases in 1995. While reasons for this record level are not clear, the above average level of rainfall during the 2018-2019 winter might have contributed.

Consistent with previous years, the highest incidence of Valley fever in 2019 was reported in counties in the Central Valley and Central Coast regions of California, including Kern, Kings, San Luis Obispo, Fresno, Tulare, Madera, and Monterey counties.

“With the continued increase in Valley fever cases, people living and working 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 especially learn more about the prevention of Valley fever.”

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 digging during construction. This fungus usually infects the lungs and can cause respiratory symptoms including cough, fever, chest pain, and tiredness. In most people, the infection will go away on its own, but anyone who has these symptoms for more than a week should ask their healthcare provider if their symptoms could be Valley fever.

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. In severe disease, the infection can spread to other parts of the body, and in these serious cases, prolonged antifungal medicine is required.

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.

To raise statewide awareness of Valley fever among the general public and healthcare providers, CDPH posts data monthly, issues periodic updates, and provides educational materials on the CDPH website. During 2019-2020, CDPH implemented a multimedia Valley fever awareness campaign to reach more people and providers, including people living in areas with moderate to high rates of Valley fever and those at risk for severe disease. Lessons learned from this awareness campaign will be used in CDPH's continued efforts to address Valley fever in California.

For more information on Valley fever, please visit CDPH's "**Could Be Valley Fever**" webpages.

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