

VALLEY FEVER

WHAT FIRST RESPONDERS NEED TO KNOW

BACKGROUND

Valley Fever is an illness caused by a fungus in the soil in many parts of California—mainly in the Central Valley. People can get it by breathing in dust that contains the fungus.

Although rare, wildland firefighters and first responders in California battling wildfires are at risk if they dig or disturb soil, operate heavy machinery, or work under windy conditions. Most infected people have mild or no symptoms, and most recover with treatment. For some, however, it can cause long-lasting illness and missed work or even require lifelong treatment.

KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

Common symptoms can be mistaken for a cold, influenza, or pneumonia **but last longer than one week**. Symptoms typically develop one to three weeks after breathing in the fungus.

If you have a potential exposure and symptoms for more than one week that are not improving with usual care, tell your supervisor and seek medical care. Only a physician can diagnose you with Valley Fever, typically by testing your blood for antibodies. If you are diagnosed, your doctor will determine if you need antifungal treatment.



FATIGUE



RASH



COUGH



FEVER



TROUBLE BREATHING



NIGHT SWEATS



MUSCLE OR JOINT PAIN



CHEST PAIN



WEIGHT LOSS

SHARE THIS WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER:

Firefighters may have a higher risk of Valley Fever due to repeated exposure during training and fire response. Wildland firefighting tasks like using heavy equipment, digging fire lines, mopping up, and working near helicopters can stir up dust, spreading the fungus spores into the air.

Health care providers should consider Valley Fever in personnel with exposure risk.

Help protect our firefighters by asking patients about their work. Be alert for Valley Fever in firefighters, especially those who've worked in high-risk areas.

Looking for more Valley Fever resources? Scan the QR code to access provider tools, health education materials, information for outdoor workers, and publications!

