July 25, 2017 — What we know: Dust storms are occurring in Kern County and are predicted to last another 10 days. Dusty conditions spread Valley Fever. All cities in the county are at risk. All individuals are at risk. Kern County PHSD has developed this fact sheet to help explain what Valley Fever is and how you can protect yourself.

What is Valley Fever?
Valley Fever is an infection of the lungs that is caused by a fungus (Coccidioides) that grows in the soil. When wind is high, the fungus is picked up from the soil and spreads in the air. Mild forms of the disease usually clear up without medical attention, but severe forms with more severe symptoms can be fatal.

Who is MOST at risk?
- children under the age of 5
- adults over the age of 60
- pregnant women
- immune-compromised
- African Americans
- Filipinos

Who is also at risk?
- People new to the area
- People who are not immune
- People who work outside
- People driving through the area

How do I get Valley Fever?
- Valley Fever is contracted by inhaling the fungus, by breathing in soil dust in the air
- Because of the current dust storm, people are more at risk of inhaling the fungus than usual
- Valley Fever is not infectious – it cannot be transmitted from person to person
- Dust (and fungus) can get on clothes and shoes, which can then be inhaled by humans and animals
- It takes 48 hours for symptoms to develop, with most symptoms occurring 7 to 20 days after exposure

How can Valley Fever be treated?
- You must be under the care of a physician to treat moderate and severe Valley Fever
- Valley Fever is treated anti-fungal medications
- These medications are by prescription only, so you must go to a doctor
How do I know if I have Valley Fever?

SEVERE SYMPTOMS
- bumps/sores/rashes on the skin
- severe body ache/severe headache
- severe cough
- intense tiredness
- fever
- back or bone pain

MODERATE SYMPTOMS
- cough
- fever
- headache/chest pain
- chills/sweats
- feeling extra tired

MILD or NO SYMPTOMS
- mild congestion
- mild fever
- mild headache

ACTION TO TAKE: When should I see my doctor or visit the ER?

SEVERE SYMPTOMS
- People with severe symptoms are hospitalized for treatment
- must seek medical attention for treatment
- ~1 in 10 people experience a life-threatening version of the disease

MODERATE SYMPTOMS
- See or call your doctor
- Moderate symptoms are a sign of a more serious infection that needs treatment.
- Symptoms clear with medical attention and prescription medication
- ~4 in 10 people show stronger symptoms, resembling the flu

MILD or NO SYMPTOMS
- Symptoms usually clear within 2 to 4 months
- ~6 in 10 people infected show no symptoms or have mild symptoms like a common cold
- If you experience mild or no symptoms, your body could be fighting off the infection
- If you are not sure whether you have symptoms or not, call your doctor to ask
- If you had been exposed to Valley Fever in the past (at least 4 months ago), you cannot get it again

What can I do to protect myself from Valley Fever?
1. Protect yourself and family members from wind
2. Keep doors and windows closed for the next three weeks to limit your exposure to the fungus brought by dust
3. Do not wear dusty clothes or shoes inside your home
4. Get tested (blood or skin test) by your doctor now to see if you are immune
5. When working or playing in areas with open dirt, wet down soil before disturbing it to reduce dust
6. While driving, keep car windows shut and use “re-circulating” air conditioning if available
7. Wear a mask (N95 mask or respirator) or cover your mouth with a cloth to prevent inhaling the fungus when it is windy or dusty outside
8. If you are in a high-risk group, do not go outside during periods of high-wind

If you have questions, contact one of these trusted resources

California Department of Public Health
http://www.cdph.ca.gov/
http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/Pages/Coccidioidomycosis.aspx

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
(800) CDC-INFO
(800) 232-4636
http://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/coccidioidomycosis/index.html

Kern County Public Health Services Department
(661) 321-3000
http://kerncountyvalleyfever.com/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Stakeholders:</strong> General Public</th>
<th><strong>Concern:</strong> What is Valley Fever, why is it an issue now, and what can you do to protect yourself?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Message 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Key Message 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Valley Fever is an infection from a fungus that grows in the soil and when the soil is dry and the wind is high the fungus spreads in the air.</td>
<td>Valley Fever symptoms resemble the flu - such as fever and body aches.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Fact 1-1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supporting Fact 2-1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Valley Fever is contracted by inhaling the fungus, and because it is the dry season (because of dust storm) people are more at risk of becoming ill than usual</td>
<td>If you had been exposed to Valley Fever before, you cannot get it again.</td>
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<td><strong>Supporting Fact 1-2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supporting Fact 2-2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>From May through September (as long as the dust storm continues), people are at more risk.</td>
<td>Once exposed to the fungus, it takes at least 48 hours to develop symptoms, usually 1 to 3 weeks.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Fact 1-3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supporting Fact 2-3</strong></td>
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<td>Certain people are more vulnerable at this time: youth and elderly, pregnant women, people who work outside, immune-compromised, and African Americans and Filipinos</td>
<td>If you feel any flu-like symptoms in the next three weeks, see a doctor or visit an emergency room immediately. They will treat you with prescription anti-fungal medication.</td>
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<td><strong>Supporting Fact 1-4</strong></td>
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<td>Valley Fever cannot be transmitted from person to person. It is NOT contagious.</td>
<td>If you do not experience symptoms, your body is likely fighting the infection, just like fighting a common cold. If you are not sure whether you have symptoms or not, call your doctor to ask.</td>
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<td><strong>Supporting Fact 1-5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supporting Fact 2-5</strong></td>
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<td>Your pets can also get Valley Fever. Ask your Vet how to protect and treat them.</td>
<td>Severe symptoms are rashes on skin, severe body ache, severe headache, severe cough, intense tiredness. These REQUIRE IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION.</td>
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<td>Stakeholders:</td>
<td>Concern: What is Valley Fever, how should I protect myself, and how should I seek treatment for it?</td>
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<td>High Risk Groups</td>
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**Key Message 1**<br>People **most vulnerable** are: youth and elderly, pregnant women, immune-compromised, and African Americans and Filipinos.<br *

**Supporting Fact 1-1**<br>Valley Fever is an infection from a fungus that grows in the soil and when wind is high the fungus spreads in the air. **Severe symptoms** are rashes on skin, severe body ache, severe headache, severe cough, intense tiredness. These **REQUIRE IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION**. **Supporting Fact 1-2**<br>Valley Fever is contracted by inhaling the fungus, and because of dust storm, people are more at risk of becoming ill than usual. If you had been exposed to Valley Fever before, you cannot get it again. **Supporting Fact 1-3**<br>Valley Fever cannot be transmitted from person to person. It is **NOT contagious**.

**Key Message 2**<br>Watch carefully for symptoms of the disease and visit your doctor or emergency department at the first sign of illness.<br *

**Supporting Fact 2-1**<br>Severe symptoms are rashes on skin, severe body ache, severe headache, severe cough, intense tiredness. These **REQUIRE IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION**. **Supporting Fact 2-2**<br>Wear a mask to prevent inhalation of the fungus if you **MUST** go outside when there are windy, dusty conditions. **Supporting Fact 2-3**<br>Once exposed to the fungus, it takes at least 48 hours to develop symptoms, usually 1 to 3 weeks.

**Key Message 3**<br>Limit your time outdoors (especially during a dust storm).<br *

**Supporting Fact 3-1**<br>Keep doors and windows closed for the next three weeks to limit your exposure to the fungus brought by dust. **Supporting Fact 3-2**<br>Get tested (blood or skin test) by your doctor now to see if you are immune. People who have lived in the valley longer may be immune. **Supporting Fact 3-3**<br>Wear a mask to prevent inhalation of the fungus if you MUST go outside when there are windy, dusty conditions.
**Stakeholders:** Farm owners and construction companies who have staff who might be engaged in outside activities on the job

**Concern:** What can businesses do, to protect workers engaged in outside activities from Valley Fever

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<tr>
<td>Determine which of your staff members have moved to San Joaquin Valley within the last 5 years</td>
<td>Test all your workers for Valley Fever immunity</td>
<td>Protect all workers engaged in work outdoors with face masks (especially during a dust storm)</td>
<td>Determine whether any of your employees (inside or outside workers) have received organ transplants, are undergoing treatment for cancer, or are pregnant</td>
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<tr>
<td>These people are at higher risk of contracting Valley Fever because they likely have not been exposed to Valley Fever before</td>
<td>Sputum culture, blood test, or skin test are used by physicians to diagnose Valley Fever</td>
<td>Wearing masks that cover the nose and face can greatly reduce the chance of inhaling the fungus (especially during a dust storm)</td>
<td>They are at higher risk of contracting Valley Fever because their immune systems are highly compromised and cannot fight the infection</td>
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<td>It is advisable to dis-allow these individuals to come to work during dust storms, or have them work indoors</td>
<td>Most health care providers and free clinics offer these diagnostic tests free of charge</td>
<td>Providing masks for your employees and mandating their use will greatly improve protection and prevent illness</td>
<td>It is advisable to dis-allow these individuals to come to work during dust storms</td>
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<td>Signs and symptoms appear within 48 to 72 hours after exposure and begin as flu-like symptoms. Illness can disable a worker for two to four months, and there is a chance they could die from the disease.</td>
<td>If someone tests positive for Valley Fever, they are immune from further infection and are safe to work outside</td>
<td>The fungus that causes Valley Fever is contracted through inhalation. The drier the soil (as we have now), the more likely it is to blow in high winds.</td>
<td>If they do become ill, they will miss work for two to four months, and there is a chance they could die from the disease. Signs and symptoms appear within 48 to 72 hours and begin as flu-like symptoms</td>
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<td>Encourage employees to have their family members tested as well</td>
<td>Consider other ways to minimize exposure to loose dirt and soil</td>
<td>Give your employees handouts from the public health department to help educate them about valley fever</td>
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Kern County Public Health Services Department is warning its citizens of a current outbreak of Valley Fever. Kern County is in the middle of a dust storm, predicted to last for another 10 days.

Valley Fever is an infection of the lungs caused by a fungus (Coccidioides) that grows in the soil. When wind is high, the fungus is carried into the air through the soil dust. Breathing in the soil dust can cause infection. Valley Fever is not contagious – you cannot get it from another person.

ILLNESS: Valley Fever symptoms are tiredness, fever, cough, congestion, and body aches. If you experience mild or no symptoms, your body could be fighting the infection. Severe symptoms are life-threatening. If you have severe symptoms call your doctor immediately.

Dr. Ramon Guevara, a specialist in Valley Fever at L.A. County Department of Public Health, advises that if symptoms worsen, you should see your doctor or visit an emergency department. If you are not sure whether you have symptoms or not, call your doctor to ask.

Some people are at higher risk: children under the age of 5, people over the age of 60, pregnant women, people who work outside, immune-compromised people, African Americans, and Filipinos. They need to see a doctor.

TAKE ACTION: You can protect yourself by taking action. We recommend that you do the following to keep you and family members safe from Valley Fever:

1. Keep doors and windows closed when there are windy, dusty conditions outside, to limit your exposure to the fungus brought by dust
2. While driving, keep car windows shut and use “re-circulating” air conditioning if available
3. Do not wear dusty clothes or shoes inside your home – they can bring the fungus inside
4. Wear a mask (N95 mask or respirator) outside for the next 4 weeks (or whenever there are high winds and dust) to prevent inhaling the fungus
5. If you in a high-risk category, limit your time outdoors during windy, dusty conditions
6. Get tested (blood or skin test) now to see if you are immune

WHAT WE ARE DOING: Kern County and the State of California are doing the following to help keep you safe from Valley Fever:

1. Distributing free N95 masks at all fire houses and emergency departments in Kern County
2. Offering free blood tests for Valley Fever at all emergency departments for the next 4 weeks
3. Prepping emergency departments and training doctors to better diagnose and treat Valley Fever

For more information contact the Kern County Public Health Services Department at (661) 321-3000, or visit the valley fever website: www.kerncountyvalleyfever.com.
For radio broadcast for Dust Storm event

This is Jerry Brown . . . governor of CA.

A dust storm has hit Kern County. Because of the dust storm you are at risk of getting Valley Fever.

Valley Fever symptoms are tiredness, fever, cough, congestion, and body aches. If symptoms worsen, see your doctor or visit an emergency department.

Keep doors and windows of your home and car closed, do not wear dusty clothes or shoes inside, and wear a mask when going outside.

For more information contact Kern County Public Health Department at (661)321-3000. Or visit the valley fever website: www.kerncountyvalleyfever.com
Valley Fever Danger
HIGH
Keep Windows Closed