

HISTOPLASMOSIS



Histoplasmosis is an uncommon but potentially serious fungal infection caused by *Histoplasma capsulatum*. Most people with the infection do not feel any different or have only mild symptoms. People with a weakened immune system or who already have a lung disease are more likely to show symptoms. Histoplasmosis is found in Wisconsin and surrounding states of the Midwest.



How is it spread?

- ▶ People can breathe in *Histoplasma* from disturbed dirt near bird or bat droppings, or when exploring or working in caves.
- ▶ You cannot become sick with histoplasmosis just by having contact with a bird or bat.
- ▶ *Histoplasma* can grow in an area that has housed birds or bats at some point in time, so you may be at risk when cleaning chicken coops, barns, or attic spaces.
- ▶ Histoplasmosis cannot be spread from person to person.



What are the signs and symptoms?

- ▶ Coughing (usually dry)
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Pneumonia
- ▶ Muscle aches and joint pain
- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Loss of appetite



What are the treatment options?

- ▶ People are usually treated with antifungal medicine. They need to take the medication for several months.
- ▶ Antibiotics do not work for histoplasmosis.



How can it be prevented?

- ▶ The best way to avoid becoming very sick is to talk to your doctor when experiencing any symptoms.
- ▶ Use caution or avoid doing activities like cave exploring and cleaning barns, chicken coops, or attics, especially if you have another chronic illness.

