

ST. CROIX ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

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Blastomycosis Basics in Humans

Blastomycosis is a fungal disease caused by the blastomyces dermatitidis found most frequently in people living in the central and southeastern United States and the Great Lakes states.

Transmission

- People with compromised immune system, campers, farmers, and hunters who spend frequent time in outdoor environments where there is a growth of the fungus are most likely to become infected.
- Blastomycosis is caused by inhaling airborne spores into the lungs after contaminated soil is disturbed by activities such as excavation, construction, digging, or wood clearing.
- You can only get blastomycosis from the fungus that is in soil or spores in the air.
- It is not spread from person to person or from animal to person.

Symptoms may include:

Fever, Cough, Cough with blood, Shortness of Breath, Muscle Aches, Bone Pain, Back Pain, Chest Pain, Fatigue, Weight Loss, Skin Sores.

The time between exposure and when symptoms develop varies widely, ranging from 21 to 100 days. The signs and symptoms also vary. 50% of cases show no symptoms and resolve without treatment. The duration of the illness also varies greatly between patients.

Diagnosis

Your doctor will biopsy your infected tissue or take a body fluid sample to examine for the blastomycosis sample. Blood tests are not reliable. Some doctors may also use chest x-rays to diagnose.

Treatment

Blastomycosis can be treated with anti-fungal medications. Anti-fungal treatment is usually continued for 6 months and recovery is usually complete. Specific questions about treatment should be addressed with a doctor.

Prevention

There is no known practical measures for the prevention of blastomycosis. It can be minimized by early recognition and appropriate treatment. Those people living in areas where the fungus is common should consider staying away from locations with wet soil and decaying vegetation.

References

Blastomycosis Basics- Minnesota Dept. of Health Online
Blastomycosis in Humans- ehow.com