



Vilas County Public Health Department

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BLASTOMYCOSIS

Blastomycosis is caused by a fungus which can cause disease in people and animals, particularly dogs. The fungus grows in nature and is more frequently found in acidic, sandy soils; decaying wood and other vegetation; and by waterways with changing water levels. It produces microscopic spores under certain conditions of temperature and humidity. These spores become airborne when the soil or debris in which the fungus is growing becomes disturbed. Blastomycosis develops when you breathe in the spores. Most exposures occur in spring and fall, with most symptoms occurring about 1-3 months later. Blastomycosis is not known to spread from person to person.

Although anyone can be infected with Blastomycosis, the risk of getting this infection is low. Your chance of getting Blastomycosis may be higher if you are in construction, farm, log, hunt, or camp in areas with moist soils containing rotting leaves and wood.

Usually, Blastomycosis symptoms look like pneumonia and other lung conditions, but it can affect other parts of the body, including skin and bone. Some people don't have any symptoms.

Blastomycosis is generally more severe in the elderly and people with health conditions such as a weakened immune system, asthma or other chronic lung conditions, smoking or diabetes.

As there are currently no effective ways to prevent Blastomycosis, it is important to know the symptoms of the disease. These include fever and dry cough which may progress to weight loss, chest pain and a persistent cough with thick sputum. Other symptoms may include muscle aches, night sweats, coughing up blood, shortness of breath and chest tightness.

Contact your health care provider if you experience any of the symptoms listed above. For more information contact, Vilas County Public Health Department at 715-479-3656 or visit our webpage at www.vilaspublichealth.com.