



# Histoplasmosis

Histoplasmosis is a lung disease caused by the fungus *Histoplasma capsulatum*. The fungus grows in soil with a lot of bird droppings or bat guano (feces). Histoplasmosis can be prevented in humans by avoiding dust and areas heavily contaminated with bird or bat droppings.

## General Histoplasmosis Information

### Geographic Distribution

The fungus *Histoplasma capsulatum* affects humans and animals worldwide and is found most commonly in the central, southeastern and Mid-Atlantic States in the US.

### Hosts and Transmission

The fungus is spread by breathing in tiny spores from fungus found in soil with bird droppings or bat guano. The spores grow in guano and bird droppings that have been accumulating or sitting for several weeks.

Stirring up dust from areas contaminated with large quantities of bird droppings or bat guano could put you at risk for histoplasmosis infection.

### Prevention and Control

You can help prevent getting histoplasmosis while visiting the parks by avoiding dust and areas contaminated with bird or bat droppings.

### Signs and Symptoms

Most humans with histoplasmosis do not experience symptoms. If people do have symptoms, they usually occur 3-17 days after exposure and include:

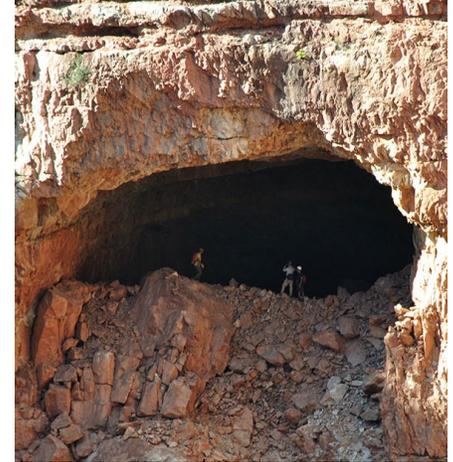
- High fever
- Cough
- Chest pain
- Headache
- Weakness

Anyone can become infected with histoplasmosis, but people with weakened immune systems are more likely to have serious infection.

### Treatment

Animals and humans with histoplasmosis often get better on their own without treatment.

If you think you have the symptoms of histoplasmosis and were recently exposed to bird or bat droppings, consult your healthcare provider. Antifungal drugs can improve serious cases of the disease in humans and animals.



CREDIT: NPS/GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK/DALE

To help prevent histoplasmosis while visiting the parks, avoid dusty areas and those contaminated with bird or bat droppings.

## One Health and Histoplasmosis

Fungi like *Histoplasma* are important species in natural areas because they break down and recycle nutrients for future generations of plants and animals. Human impacts on the environment – such as disruptions of natural habitats with land development – affect habitats where birds and bats live by releasing the fungus into the environment and in turn causing outbreaks of histoplasmosis.

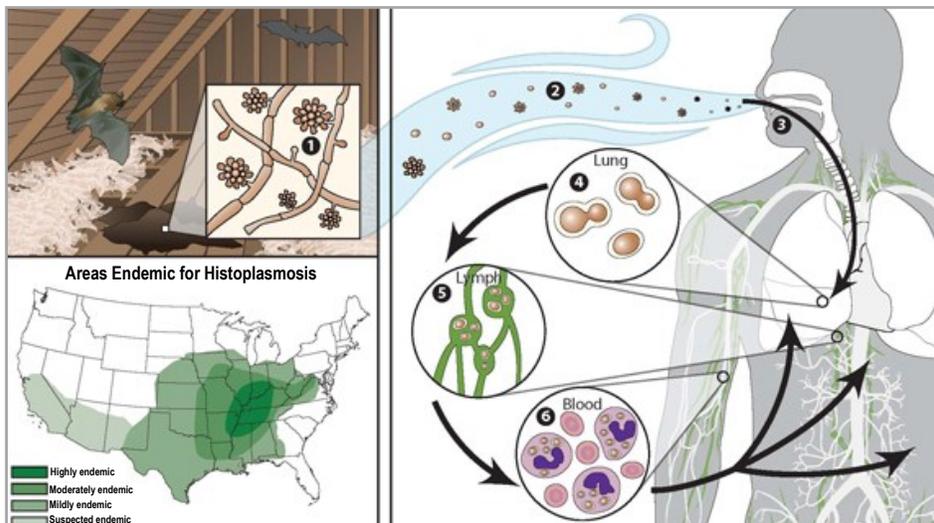
By protecting natural environments and their ecological properties and processes, we can help protect ourselves from histoplasmosis –



## More Information

Biological Resources Division and Office of Public Health  
Publichealthprogram@nps.gov  
1201 Oakridge Drive, Suite 200, Fort Collins, CO 80525

<http://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/histoplasmosis/>



CREDIT: CDC

In the environment, *Histoplasma capsulatum* exists as a fungus. Spores are produced that are aerosolized and dispersed. The fungus can be inhaled into the lungs by a susceptible host, and can infect the body with