

BLASTOMYCOSIS AND PETS



Blastomycosis is a rare, but potentially deadly fungal infection caused by *Blastomyces dermatitidis*. Half of the people and animals who are infected will not show symptoms. People and animals with a weakened immune system are more likely to have severe symptoms. *B. dermatitidis* is found in Wisconsin and throughout the Midwest. Treatment requires several months of an antifungal medicine.



What causes it?

- ▶ Blastomycosis may develop when the fungal spores are inhaled from the environment and the lungs become infected.
 - ▶ *Blastomyces* is most commonly found in moist soil, riverbanks, and low swampy areas. The spores can also become airborne when the dirt is disturbed.
- ▶ Dogs and cats develop blastomycosis because they are low to the ground. Sniffing or digging in the soil may increase their risk of exposure to the fungal spores.
- ▶ Blastomycosis does not spread among humans or animals.



What are the symptoms in pets?

- ▶ Skin sores (especially on the face or paws)
- ▶ Coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath
- ▶ Unexplained limping
- ▶ Difficulty seeing
- ▶ Loss of appetite or weight loss

What are the symptoms in humans?

- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Chest or back pain
- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Crusted skin sores



Can a person get blastomycosis from their pet?

- ▶ Blastomycosis cannot spread directly from your pet to you.
- ▶ Infection in your pet could indicate an area near you is contaminated with the fungus.
- ▶ Blastomycosis is most commonly found in dogs, but can affect other animals.



How can it be prevented?

- ▶ There is no vaccine available.
- ▶ Limit activities that disrupt soil at the water's edge, landscaped areas, or wooded terrain.
- ▶ Since there is no environmental testing available, monitor yourself and your pet for symptoms.
 - ▶ Talk to a veterinarian immediately if your pet experiences symptoms of blastomycosis.

