What is Valley fever? Valley fever is caused by the fungus, *Coccidioides*, which is found in the soil in Arizona, California, and several other western states, as well as parts of Mexico, Central America, and South America. Valley fever is caused by breathing in spores when contaminated dirt is disturbed. Individuals who work outdoors including construction workers, agricultural workers, and military personnel are at particular risk for contracting Valley fever. Cases are rising in the US (see graph).

Symptoms of Valley fever include coughing, chest pain, fever, headache, chills, and fatigue. People with weakened immune systems are at particular risk for serious cases. Severe cases might last for weeks, months, or years, and can result in hospitalization and death.

Valley fever infection can spread beyond the lungs to other parts of the body, including such vital organs as the heart, liver, and brain. Meningeal infection occurs when the fungus reaches the brain. Patients experiencing this type of infection require antifungal treatment for life. If untreated, meningeal infection is fatal.

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Fungal infections and implications for Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines, making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness, and death. AMR kills an estimated 1.27 million people worldwide. Fungal diseases are of particular concern because there are limited treatments, and some fungi have become resistant to all of them. It soon may become impossible to treat Valley fever unless there is more investment in R&D for new antifungal therapeutics.

Sources:
1. "Valley Fever (Coccidioidomycosis)." CDC. 2020.
2. "Valley fever, historically found only in the Southwest, is spreading. It can have devastating consequences." NBC News. 2023.
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