Riverside University HEALTH SYSTEM Public Health

Valley Fever (2019-2023) | September 2024
Riverside County

WHAT IS VALLEY FEVER?

Valley fever (also called coccidioidomycosis or "cocci") is a disease caused by a fungus that grows in the soil and dirt in some areas of California and the southwestern United States. People and animals can get sick when they breathe in dust that contains the Valley fever fungus. This fungus usually infects the lungs and can cause respiratory symptoms including cough, fever, chest pain, and tiredness. In rare cases, the Valley fever fungus can spread to other parts of the body and cause severe disease – this type of Valley fever is less common and is called disseminated Valley fever.

HOW DO YOU GET VALLEY FEVER?

You can get Valley fever by **breathing in dust** from outdoor air that contains **spores of the Coccidioides fungus** that grows in the soil. Like seeds from a plant, a fungus grows and spreads from tiny spores that are too small to see. When soil or dirt is stirred up by strong winds or while digging, dust containing these fungus spores can get into the air. Anyone who lives, works, or travels in an area where the Valley fever fungus grows can breathe in these fungus spores from outdoor dust without knowing it and become infected. Valley fever is not contagious, meaning it cannot spread from one person or animal to another.

VALLEY FEVER IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY

The total number of reported Valley fever cases in Riverside County from 2019 to 2023 was **2,030**. The number of reported cases increased from **336** in 2019 to **458** in 2023 and the age-adjusted rate per 100,000 people increased from **13.0** to **17.0** during the same time-period **(Figure 1)**. Overall, the highest number of cases were reported in October **(10.2%)** and the lowest number were reported in February **(6.8%)**, reflecting the seasonality of Valley fever. Most reported Valley fever cases were in males **(61.6%)** and out of each of the age groups, the highest percentage **(22.5%)** was seen in the 55-65 age group.

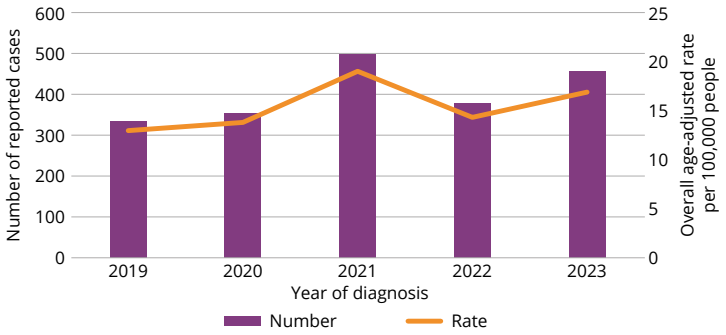

Figure 1. Number of reported Valley fever cases and overall rate per 100,000 people by year of diagnosis in Riverside County, 2019-2023

The Healthy Places Index (HPI) is a measure of community conditions that impact life expectancy. Areas with low HPI scores have less healthy community conditions, and areas with high HPI scores have healthier community conditions. Reported Valley fever cases were more likely to be in HPI quartiles 1 **(36.5%)** and 2 **(36.7%)** compared to quartiles 3 **(24.9%)** and 4 **(1.9%)**. The age-adjusted rate of Valley fever during 2019-2023 was highest in the Northwest (**34.16** per 100,000 people in zip code 92503 and **29.17** per 100,000 people in zip code 92570), Coachella Valley (**26.75** per 100,000 people in zip code 92264) and the East (**24.50** per 100,000 people in zip code 92225) **(Figure 2)**.

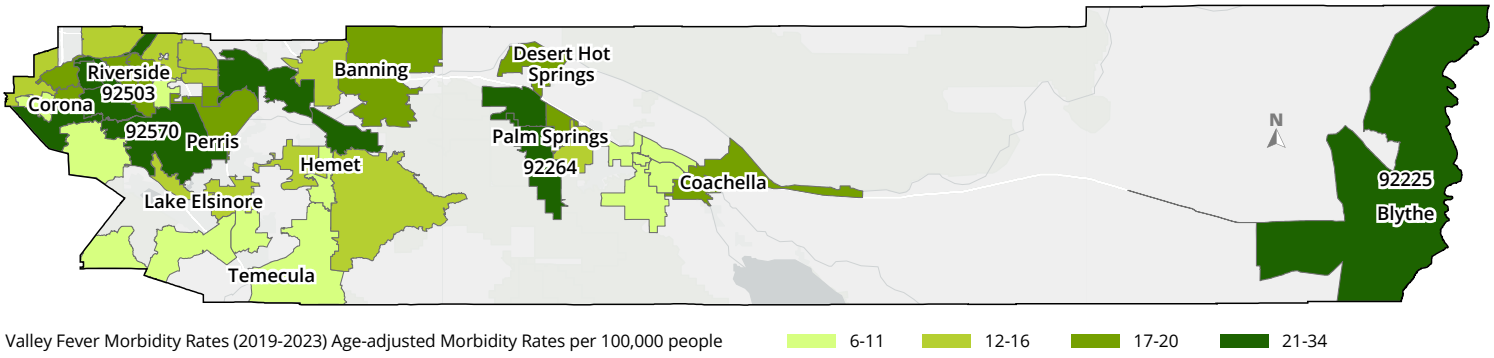

Figure 2. Map showing the age-adjusted rate of Valley fever per 100,000 people in Riverside County, 2019-2023.

Source: Epidemiology and Program Evaluation

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More Data Reports and Statistics:
www.ruhealth.org/public-health/epidemiology-program-evaluation/data-report-statistics