

# Histoplasmosis (“Histo”)

*Histoplasmosis is a disease caused by fungal spores found in soil and in bat and bird droppings. The spores can float in the air, and workers who breathe them in can become sick. Workers who are most at risk include bridge painters, demolition crews, equipment operators, roofers, and heating and air-conditioning system installers.*

## Juan’s Story

Juan was installing an air conditioning unit in an attic of an old home. He noticed bird or bat droppings on the floor and beams. In the middle of the project, he began coughing and having chills and a fever. He went to his doctor and described his working conditions. His doctor diagnosed histoplasmosis and treated him with an antifungal medication. The doctor told Juan that his discomfort might continue, because histoplasmosis can scar lung tissue.

- ✘ **Have you or someone you know worked on a project where bird or bat droppings were present? If so, what happened?**
- ✘ **What could have been done to protect Juan?**

## Remember This

- Avoid areas that have bird or bat droppings. Persons with weakened immune systems are at greatest risk for severe infection.
- Recognize the symptoms:
 

~ Fever	~ Chills	~ Chest pain
~ Cough	~ Headach	~ Body aches
~ Fatigue	e	
- If possible, seal off points where bats and birds could enter your work area.

If there are bird or bat droppings in your work area:

- Wear a NIOSH-certified respirator.
- Wear single-use protective clothing and shoe coverings and dispose of them in sealed, heavy-duty plastic bags.
- Carefully mist dusty material or piles of droppings with water before and during cleanup to keep the dust down.
- Throw away the wetted material in secure containers or double, heavy-duty plastic bags. Truck-mounted vacuums are best for large amounts of droppings.
- Follow all rules for removing, transporting, and disposing of contaminated materials.

## How can we stay safe today?

What will we do at the worksite to prevent histoplasmosis?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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OSHA Standard: 1926.25

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- ✘ Wear a NIOSH-certified respirator.
- ✘ Wear disposable protective clothing during work, and wash up or shower afterward.
- ✘ Mist piles of droppings with water before and during cleanup to keep the dust down.