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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Public Health Releases 2022 Valley Fever Data During Valley Fever Awareness Month**

*Valley Fever dashboard has been updated on Public Health website.*

Kern County Public Health announces preliminary 2022 Valley Fever data for Kern County. Public Health has confirmed 2,550 cases of Valley Fever in Kern County residents during 2022, including 34 deaths. Confirmed cases for 2022 are the lowest we have seen in a single year since 2016.

Coccidioidomycosis, also known as Valley Fever, is an illness caused by a fungus that lives in the soil and dirt. People and animals can get exposed by breathing in spores of the fungus. The spores are small and not visible to the naked eye. About 60% of infected people will not develop symptoms. People who do develop symptoms can have fever, cough, chest pain, muscle or joint aches, tiredness, headaches, weight loss and rash. In severe infections, the fungus can infect the brain, joints, bone, skin, or other organs. In rare cases, infection can lead to death. Most people who get Valley Fever fully recover and do not get this disease again; however, those with severe infections may need medication for several months. Valley Fever cannot be spread from one person to another or from animals to people.

“Anyone can get Valley Fever and it is endemic to Kern County, so it is important to be aware of the symptoms and ways to reduce our exposure,” says Brynn Carrigan, Director of Kern County Public Health. “We encourage residents who develop Valley Fever symptoms such as cough, fever, chest pain, and tiredness that lasts two weeks or more, to talk to their health care provider.”

Practical tips to help prevent Valley Fever include:

- On windy and dusty days, stay inside and keep windows and doors closed.
- When driving through a dusty area, keep car windows closed and use recirculating air.
- Control dust in your yard by covering open dirt areas around your house with grass, plants, or other ground cover.
- Try to avoid dusty areas outside, like construction or excavation sites. If you cannot avoid these dusty areas, or if you must be outdoors in dusty air, consider wearing an N95 respirator certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to help protect against dust that can cause Valley fever.

Visit our website <https://kernpublichealth.com/valley-fever/> for more information.

*Grounded in Health*

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