

Bumps in the Night!!!!

February 2015 Issue

Paranormal "U"

Histoplasmosis

Safety Series

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Investigating the paranormal is an exciting and challenging activity. More often than not, investigations are calm and run smoothly without issues of any sort. We usually have a heads up if the location we are investigating has any mold, mildew, asbestos or other factors that may cause those with allergies to have breathing issues. It is for this reason our team always has breathing masks on hand. Sometimes the dangers in this field are not known until it's too late. Often times paranormal groups will give back to the community by cleaning up old cemeteries or assisting those who have purchased historical properties, hopefully in exchange to be able to investigate the property at some point in the future.

Several paranormal groups assisted on various weekends to assist in the clean-up of a well-known historical location last year. The property is old and had a lot of debris that had been lying around which needed to be hauled away. Working outside, in the fresh air hauling old debris to a dumpster seems like a simple task, right? What many may not think about, and this is where the danger lies: "How long has this debris been here?" "Had any animals made their home in this debris?" "What is actually inside of the debris?" Old abandoned properties are a perfect shelter for wild animals. The new owners of the property and those helping with clean-up did not know that the debris they were hauling away had bird and bat droppings in it.

A person can develop histoplasmosis when they breathe in spores of fungus left behind by the bird and bat droppings. Just by accidentally breathing in these fungus spores can create a fungal infection in the lungs. Not everyone who breathes in the spores will develop histoplasmosis. It depends on your body's ability to fight off the infection. If it does develop into histoplasmosis, a doctor will have to prescribe you an anti-fungal medication to treat it. The most common symptoms of histoplasmosis are fever, fatigue and a cough. The infection can be worse in those who already have breathing issues, or past medical issues that would hinder the immune system such as Aids or cancer. If left untreated, the infection can cause swelling in the lining of the lungs and scar tissue within the lungs which could affect your breathing for the rest of your life. Other symptoms (not common) are chest/ joint pain and coughing up blood. In extremely rare cases, the infection can spread throughout the entire body causing inflammation around the lining of the heart, brain and spinal column. These symptoms can also include chest pains, as well as neck stiffness and headaches.

Some who volunteered to help with the clean-up of this location did end up developing histoplasmosis. There was a large, concentrated amount of droppings held within the debris they were moving. Most would think since they were working outside, in a well ventilated area that there would be no need for wearing a breathing mask. So, even if you do not have any breathing issues, allergies or asthma you certainly need to assess the environment you are going into. Some of the places paranormal investigators venture have been vacant and run down for a while. Thank goodness most of the paranormal teams are a tight knit community. Once the diagnosis was discovered and traced back to this particular property, all that were involved in the clean-up were notified and encouraged to get checked out.



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I hope this has helped some of you become aware of one of the unseen dangers of paranormal investigating. Although uncommon, I had never even heard of histoplasmosis until last summer when some of the people I was investigating with said they had developed it. As a result, I personally have been wearing my mask in some instances as a precautionary measure when entering abandoned locations. So before you start a clean-up, or walk through of an abandoned location, you may want to wear a N95 Respirator mask and see if there are any birds or bats up in the rafters. Chances are, wearing that pesky mask just may protect you from developing histoplasmosis.

To find out additional information you can go to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/histoplasmosis/>

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001082.htm>

<http://paranormalsafety.com/>

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