

HEALTH *Special Edition*

Lethal Fungus Strain in Oregon

A new strain of airborne fungus is spreading in Oregon that kills about one out of four people infected with it, according to researchers at Duke University.

A new strain of a fungus called *Cryptococcus gattii* has infected dogs, cats, sheep, elk, and other mammals, but you can't pick up the fungus with contact with animals. Instead, people get it from inhaling spores released by trees.

Symptoms, which can take months to develop, include coughs, chest pain, shortness of breath, headache, breathing problems, and other ailments. People who pick up the fungus might have to take medication for months, or even years. Extreme cases might require surgery.

"It's in the environment, and we're exposed to the environment," researcher Edmond Byrnes III of Duke

University Medical Center told LiveScience. "And the environmental range of this has been expanding."



To date, five out of 21 people infected in the United States have died from the fungus.

Researchers are uncertain as to how the fungus, which originated in the tropics, came to Oregon via Canada, but expect it to spread.

However, public health officials in Oregon want to reassure the public that the fungus is rare, infection rates are low, and it's treatable.

People most at risk are those with compromised immune systems.

"The fungus is rare, getting sick from the fungus is uncommon and if people do get sick there

are treatments. The public health threat from the fungus is low," said Katrina Hedberg, Oregon public health epidemiologist, on a statement on the Oregon Public Health Division's website. "If people are concerned about their symptoms, they should contact their health care provider right away."

Since 2004, there have been about 50 people identified with the illness in Washington, Oregon and California. About 10 people have died.

King Farmers Market Reopens

After a highly successful first season, the King Farmers Market is back, bigger and better than before with more produce vendors, more special events, music, meat, cheese, cut flowers, plant starts, hot food, cooking demonstrations, and an adjacent children's playground.

The market will open its second season on Sunday, May 2, at 10 a.m. at Northeast Seventh Avenue and Wygant (a block south of Alberta Street, adjacent to King School Park.) The market will continue every Sunday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., through Oct. 31.

This year, Oregon Trail Card (food stamp) users can receive up to \$10 in matching tokens for use at the King Farmers Market.

You're invited to join your neighbors this Sunday and every Sunday to celebrate a new season of the freshest local food.



PHOTO BY KENNETH AARON/KING NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
Crowds line up for fresh produce and other foods during the inaugural season of the King Farmer's Market, a block south of Northeast Alberta Street, adjacent to King School Park.

HEALTHWATCH

Free Body Basics -- This physician recommended class is appropriate for all ages and health conditions. Plan to attend this one-session class and learn the simple guidelines for safe exercises, including stretching. Call 503-256-4000 to register.

Families with Mental Illness -- A free, 12-week course for people whose family members live with mental illness is offered at Emanuel Hospital, Mt. Hood Medical Center and Providence Medical Center. The course has been described as "life-changing" by former participants. Registration is required by calling 503-203-3326.

Managing Chronic Hepatitis C -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m. The informative session is led by a registered nurse to help you manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctor referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

Better Breathers -- An asthma educational support group meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month from 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. at Adventist Medical Center. For information, call 503-251-6830.

Cancer Resource Center -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-

hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Lead Poisoning Prevention -- Learn how to protect your family from lead poisoning. Ideal for folks in live in older homes with children or pregnant women. Qualified participants receive a free kit of safety and testing supplies. Call 503-284-6827.

Parenting Classes -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: providence.org/classes.

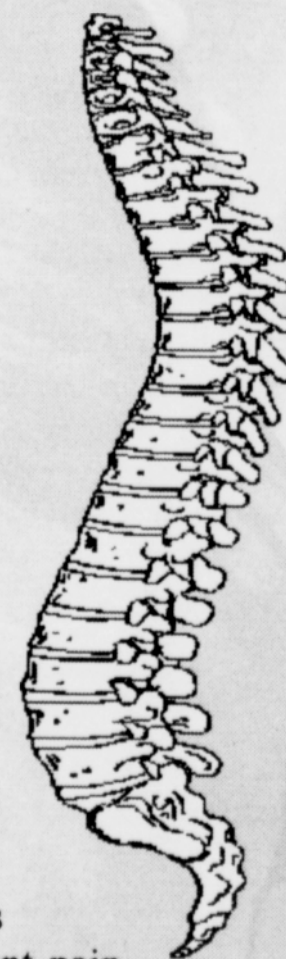
Cardiac-Rehab Exercises -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For information, call 503-251-6260.

Family Caregiver Support Group -- This topic-oriented group offers a safe place to discuss the stresses, challenges and rewards of providing care to an older relative or friend. Meets the first Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital.

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