What is blastomycosis?
Blastomycosis is a fungal infection caused by the dimorphic (two forms: yeast and mould) fungus *Blastomyces dermatitidis*. The fungus grows naturally in moist soil in the central and southeastern United States, particularly in the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys and the Great Lakes states. Blastomycosis most commonly infects people and dogs, but cats, horses, wolves, ferrets, and bears have developed blastomycosis. The fatality rate of blastomycosis infections is approximately five percent nationwide.

How is blastomycosis transmitted?
Blastomycosis is transmitted by the inhalation of spore-laden dust.

What are the symptoms of blastomycosis?
Many people infected with *Blastomyces* do not develop symptoms of disease. Some people may develop an acute lung infection, beginning with a fever and dry cough. The lung infection may lead to weight loss, chest pain, and a persistent cough associated with thick sputum. Other common symptoms include muscle aches, night sweats, coughing up blood, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. In rare cases, the infection may spread from the blood to the skin, bone, or other organs, including the prostate gland, testes, kidneys, and the brain.

What are the symptoms in animals?
Most animals do not develop clinical symptoms of disease. The most common symptoms in dogs include weight loss, loss of appetite, cough, difficulty breathing, lameness, eye disease, and skin lesions. In rare cases, dogs may develop a fever, and bone, kidney, or brain infections.

How soon do the symptoms appear?
Symptoms usually appear three weeks to several months after infection in people and usually two to three weeks after infection in dogs.

How is blastomycosis diagnosed?
People with symptomatic blastomycosis may have abnormalities present on their chest x-rays, but a diagnosis can only be confirmed by the identification of blastomyces in the sputum, skin, or biopsy of infected tissue. Blood tests may be done to determine if a person has had a previous blastomycosis infection, however, blood tests will not confirm all cases and may result in a false positive. Skin tests may also be done, but do not confirm a blastomycosis infection.

What is the treatment for blastomycosis?
Antifungal medication such as amphotericin B, itraconazole, or fluconazole is necessary. Severe eye infections may lead to blindness and severe infections in the lungs or nervous system may result in death.

How can I prevent blastomycosis?
It is difficult to identify blastomyces in the environment and there are no known ways of controlling blastomyces. To protect yourself and your pet from serious infection, see your health care provider/ veterinarian as soon as symptoms appear.

Additional Information:
- Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Service
- Minnesota Department of Health

This fact sheet is meant to provide basic information. For specific health concerns please contact your physician or veterinarian. Updated 2013.