

Cryptococcosis is caused by a fungus known as *Cryptococcus neoformans*. The infection may be spread to humans through contact with pigeon droppings or unwashed raw fruit. Contact with an infected individual may also spread the infection. Individuals with disorders characterized by lowered immunity (for instance, HIV infection) are at high risk for contracting these infections. Cryptococcosis is caused by the fungus *Cryptococcus neoformans*. It is spread by contact with pigeon droppings, unwashed raw fruit or by infected individuals. People with immune deficiencies or lowered immunity (such as people undergoing cancer chemotherapy or organ transplants or those infected with HIV-AIDS) are at high risk for contracting this fungal infection. Cryptococcosis occurs worldwide. In the United States it occurs predominately in the Southeastern states and usually in adults aged forty to sixty years of age. It tends to occur more often in males than females. Individuals with disorders involving reduced or impaired immunity to infection are particularly at risk. The diagnosis depends on proof of the presence of *Cryptococcus neoformans* in either a bodily fluid or body tissue. The presence of the fungus may be seen under a light microscope in some circumstances; other circumstances require growing the organism from samples of fluid taken from a patient. An immunological test designed to detect the substance that would be mobilized in the body to fight this fungus if it were present (antigen) is available in commercial kits.