

Assessing risk of lung disease through contact with birds

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Ornamental birds and feather pillows, plus daily exposure to pigeons may contribute to the development hypersensitive pneumonitis, a disease that can cause irreversible damage to the lungs. Therefore, Mexican scientists designed an informative tool to assess the likelihood of suffering the disease.

This platform also helps to quantify the number of people at risk and provide recommendations to users, allowing physicians and researchers to know the number of people who already have the disease, because in Mexico there are no precise figures available.

This initiative belongs to the project "An unexpected enemy", part of the portal "Science that breathes" (www.cienciaqueserespira.org), which is sponsored by the National Institute of Respiratory Diseases (INER) and makes available a set of online tools and applications that calculate the risk of developing various diseases, in addition to providing medical advice.

According to the researcher, hypersensitive pneumonitis is an [interstitial lung disease](#) characterized by inflammation of the lung interstitium (which is a network of collagen) after inhaling organic substances. In many cases, chronic dry cough may be the only symptom of the disease, in others, shortness of breath at first manifested after making efforts and then at rest; if not detected may progress to cause irreversible lung damage.

While it is due to the inhalation of dust from certain organic particles from different sources, such as cereals, animals, dust and vapors of water tanks, "usually associated with birds because their excrement has a protein (spread Environment with fluttering), which, can be genetically susceptible and develop an exaggerated [inflammatory response](#) to that exposure," explains Dr. Buendia Roldán.



The prolonged and repeated exposure initiates a chronic inflammatory response, manifested by an increase of lymphocytes in the interstitium. "Consequently, the inflammation leads to [lung fibrosis](#), it would be and the presence of scars on the body," says the researcher.

Therefore, it is very important that the disease is diagnosed as early as possible to prevent lung damage. According to Dr. Buendia Roldán, it is required to make a high-resolution CT and spirometry. "In the INER have a blood test can detect the avian antigens."

Treatment requires, first, to avoid exposure to the antigen and the administration of anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressive. "In patients who are in the early stages of the disease the cure is achieved, but in those who already have fibrosis control must be achieved to keep

moving forward," he says.

Thus, it seems harmless, having a parrot pet or a pair of canaries is, in many cases, like playing Russian roulette with the lungs. The situation is worse for professional poultry fanciers.

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