

Troops in middle east may be at risk for lung problems

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Study found dust exposure poses health hazards.

(HealthDay)—U.S. soldiers serving in the Middle East and Afghanistan may be at risk for lung damage from exposure to dust there, a new study suggests.

Researchers analyzed the composition, mineral content, and bacteria, fungi and virus levels in [dust samples](#) collected from Iraq and Afghanistan, and they measured the amount of dust exposure experienced by troops.

The investigators concluded that dust exposure levels and the dangerous microbes and metal content in the [dust](#) pose a significant health risk to U.S. troops.

"Dust and sandstorms are persistent problems in Middle Eastern regions because the environmental conditions—extreme temperatures, very low

humidity and exertion—create the need for individuals to breathe through their mouth, thus bypassing the nasal pharynx and pulling particles deep into the lungs," wrote study author Mark Lyles, of the U.S. Naval War College.

"The acute effects of such exposure would cause shortness of breath and pulmonary inflammation, whereas chronic exposure could cause scarring and other long-term respiratory problems," Lyles concluded.

The findings were to be presented Saturday at the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology annual meeting in Houston.

Research presented at medical meetings should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: The American Lung Association explains how to [protect your lungs](#).

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