

Yersiniosis

Fact Sheet



What is yersiniosis?

It is a disease caused by bacteria called *Yersinia enterocolitica*. It can be passed from infected animals, usually pigs, to people. Young children get this disease more often than adults. It is more common in the winter.

How is it spread?

It is spread by eating contaminated food, especially raw or undercooked pork products. Drinking contaminated unpasteurized milk or untreated water can also spread it. Infection may occur after contact with infected animals, or it can be spread from one person's stool or soiled fingers to another person's mouth. This may occur as a result of poor hand washing.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Signs and symptoms depend on the age of the person infected. Common symptoms in children are fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, which is often bloody. Older children and adults may get fever and right-sided abdominal pain, which could be confused with infection of the appendix. In some cases, skin rash, joint pain, or spread of bacteria to the blood can occur. Symptoms start 4 to 7 days after infection and last 1 to 3 weeks or longer.

How will I know if I have it?

Your health care provider will need to send samples of your stool for laboratory testing.

How is it treated?

People usually get better on their own without antibiotics, though they may be used in severe infections.

How can I prevent this disease?

Here are some ways to prevent it:

- Do not eat raw or undercooked pork.
- Wash hands with soap and water before eating and preparing food, after touching animals, and after handling raw meat.
- Wash hands and fingernails carefully with soap and water, especially after handling raw chitterlings (pig intestines) and before touching infants or their toys, bottles, or pacifiers. Someone other than the food handler should care for children while chitterlings are being prepared.
- Use separate cutting boards for meat and other foods.
- Eat or drink only pasteurized milk or milk products.
- Dispose of animal feces in a sanitary manner.

What about work and daycare?

Children with symptoms should not attend daycare. People with symptoms should not work as food handlers or cooks while ill. People who work in health care should not do patient care until they no longer have diarrhea.

Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your health care provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - www.cdc.gov - is another source of health information.