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## Yersiniosis Facts



### What is yersiniosis?

Yersiniosis is an infectious disease caused by bacteria called yersinia. Infection with yersinia occurs most often in young children. The most common source of the bacteria is pigs but other strains of the bacteria are also found in other animals including rodents, rabbits, sheep, cattle, horses, dogs, and cats.

### What causes yersiniosis?

People are infected most often by eating contaminated food, especially raw or undercooked pork products. The preparation of raw pork intestines (chitterlings) may be particularly risky. Infants can be infected if their caregiver handles raw pork and then does not clean their hands properly before handling the infant or the infant's toys, bottles, or pacifiers. Drinking contaminated unpasteurized milk or untreated water can also spread the infection. Yersiniosis infection can sometimes happen after a person is in contact with infected animals. On rare occasions, it can spread when the bacteria is passed from the stool or dirty fingers of one person to the mouth of another person. This may happen when basic hygiene and handwashing habits are inadequate. It is rarely spread through contaminated blood during a transfusion.

### What are the symptoms of yersiniosis?

Yersiniosis is most common in children but can cause different symptoms depending on the age of the person infected. Common symptoms in children are fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, which is often bloody. Symptoms usually start four to seven days after being infected and may last one to three weeks or longer. Older children and adults may have right-sided abdominal pain and fever which may be confused with appendicitis. In a small number of cases, complications such as skin rash, joint pains, or spread of bacteria to the blood can happen.

### Who is most at risk for Yersiniosis?

Diarrhea may be more severe in children but teenagers and older adults may be more likely to have more serious complications. Yersiniosis may cause an infection in the blood in people whose immune system does not work well (for example: a person with HIV/AIDS).

### How is yersiniosis treated?

Usually, yersiniosis will go away on its own. However, in more severe or complicated infections, antibiotics may be useful.

## How I reduce the risk of yersiniosis?

Avoid eating raw or undercooked pork.

Drink only pasteurized milk or milk products.

Wash hands with soap and water before eating and preparing food, after contact with animals, and after handling raw meat.

After handling raw chitterlings, clean hands and fingernails thoroughly with soap and water 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. Carefully clean all cutting boards, counter-tops, and utensils with soap and hot water after preparing raw meat.

Dispose of animal feces in a sanitary manner. Be sure to thoroughly wash your hands afterwards.

Adapted from: Iowa Department of Health

