

Yersiniosis

FACTSHEET

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Division of Epidemiology, Disease Surveillance and Investigation
899 N. Capitol Street, NE, Suite 580
Washington, D.C. 20002
202-442-9371 Fax 202-442-8060 *
www.dchealth.dc.gov

What is Yersiniosis?

Yersiniosis is a bacterial disease that generally infects the intestinal tract (bowel).

Who gets Yersiniosis?

Anyone can get yersiniosis, but it occurs most often in young children. It is more common during winter months.

What are the symptoms of Yersiniosis?

Common symptoms in children are fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, which is often bloody. In older children and adults, right-sided abdominal pain and fever may be the only symptoms and may be confused with appendicitis. In a small number of cases, complications such as skin rash, joint pains, or the spread of the bacteria to the bloodstream can occur.

How is Yersiniosis spread?

Yersiniosis is spread 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 caretakers handle raw chitterlings and then do not adequately clean their hands before handling the infant or the infant's toys, bottles, or pacifiers. Drinking contaminated unpasteurized milk or untreated water can also be a source of the infection. The infection can also be spread by passing the bacteria from the stool or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another person. This may occur when an infected person does not wash their hands properly.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms generally appear three to seven days after exposure.

Is a person with Yersiniosis contagious?

Yes, the disease can be spread from person-to-person from the feces during the time the person is experiencing diarrhea and in some cases, for several weeks or months afterward. Good personal hygiene is important to stop the spread of this disease if you are infected.

How is Yersiniosis treated?

Uncomplicated cases of diarrhea usually resolve on their own without antibiotic treatment. However, in more severe or complicated infections several antibiotics are available to treat yersiniosis.

Should a person with Yersiniosis be excluded from work or school?

Children and adults should be excluded from work or school as long as diarrhea is present. Once diarrhea has resolved, exclusion is no longer necessary.

Can Yersiniosis be prevented?

Yersiniosis can be prevented by:

- Avoid eating raw or undercooked pork
- Consume only pasteurized milk and milk products
- Wash hands with soap and water before eating and preparing food, after contact with animals, after handling raw meat, and after using the toilet
- After handling raw chitterlings, clean hands and fingernails scrupulously with soap and water before touching infants or their toys, bottles, or pacifiers. Someone other than the food-handler should care for children while the chitterlings are being prepared
- 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.

Want more information?

Additional information about yersiniosis and other related health care topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-5842.

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