

YERSINIOSIS FACTSHEET

What is Yersiniosis?

Yersiniosis is an infection caused most often by eating raw or undercooked pork contaminated with *Yersinia enterocolitica* bacteria.

Who can get Yersiniosis?

Anyone. However, most people become infected by eating contaminated food, especially raw or undercooked pork, or through contact with a person who has prepared a pork product, such as [chitlins](#). For example, babies and infants can be infected if their caretakers handle contaminated food and then do not wash their hands properly before handling the child or the child's toys, bottles, or pacifiers. People occasionally become infected after drinking contaminated milk or untreated water, or after contact with infected animals or their feces/poop.

What are the symptoms of Yersiniosis?

The symptoms of yersiniosis depend on the age of the person infected. Common symptoms in children are fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, which is often bloody. Whereas, in older children and adults, right-sided abdominal pain and fever may be the predominant symptoms and may be confused with appendicitis. Complications are rare, and may include skin rash, joint pains, or spread of bacteria to the bloodstream.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms typically appear 4 to 7 days after exposure and may last 1 to 3 weeks or longer.

How does 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 properly 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.
- On rare occasions, people become infected through person-to-person contact. For example, caretakers can become infected if they do not wash their hands properly after changing the diaper of a child with yersiniosis.
- Even more rarely, people may become infected through contaminated blood during a transfusion.

How is Yersiniosis treated?

Yersiniosis usually goes away on its own without antibiotic treatment. However, antibiotics may be used to treat more severe or complicated infections.

How can a person protect themselves against Yersiniosis?

- Avoid eating raw or undercooked pork.
- Consume only pasteurized milk and milk products, such as soft cheese, ice cream, and yogurt.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating and preparing food, after contact with animals, and after handling raw meat.
- After handling raw chitlins, clean hands and fingernails carefully with soap and water before touching infants or their toys, bottles, or pacifiers. Someone other than the person handling food should care for children while chitlins are being prepared.
- Prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen by using one cutting board for raw meat and another cutting board for fresh produce.
- Carefully clean all cutting boards, countertops, and utensils with soap and hot water after preparing raw meat.
- Dispose of animal feces/poop in a sanitary manner.

Where can I get more information?

Information about shigellosis and other related health topics can be found at www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit <https://dchealth.dc.gov> or call (202) 442-9021.

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