



Yersinia Fact Sheet

What are *Yersinia*?

Yersinia are a group of bacteria that can cause gastrointestinal illness. The most common species is *Yersinia enterocolitica*. Pigs are a major reservoir for *Y. enterocolitica*, but other animals and people can also carry the bacteria.

Who is at risk to get *Yersinia* infections?

Anyone can get infected with *Yersinia*, but people who prepare pork products, consume pork products, or have contact with pigs are at higher risk. Young children get this infection more commonly than other people.

How is *Yersinia* spread?

Yersinia is spread by eating contaminated food or by contact with contaminated surfaces. Chitlins in particular have been associated with *Yersinia* infections. Less commonly, people have gotten *Yersinia* from drinking contaminated milk or water, from contact with infected animals, contact with animal feces, and by person-to-person spread.

What are the symptoms of *Yersinia* infection?

Usually, people get sick 4 to 7 days after exposure. The symptoms of *Yersinia* infection vary with the age of the patient. Young kids usually experience fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, which may be bloody. Symptoms last 1 to 3 weeks, and could last longer. Older kids and adults are more likely to experience fever and right-sided abdominal pain, which may be mistaken for appendicitis. Rarely, people will experience more serious complications, such as a blood infection.

Are there long-term consequences to *Yersinia* infection?

Most people will get completely better from this infection. However, some people may experience some lasting symptoms. Some people may get a kind of joint pain called “reactive arthritis” in their knees, ankles, or wrists. This usually develops about a month after the infection begins, and generally goes away after 1-6 months. Some people, more commonly women, may get a skin rash called “erythema nodosum” on their legs and torso. The rash usually goes away within a month.

How is this disease diagnosed?

Lab tests are done on stool specimens to identify *Yersinia*. If a provider suspects *Yersinia*, they should alert the lab to make sure the correct tests are done.

What is the treatment for *Yersinia* infection?

Most people with *Yersinia* will get better without treatment. Antibiotics can be used for severe or complicated infections.

What can be done to prevent the spread of this disease?

- WASH YOUR HANDS thoroughly after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or before preparing food. Wash your hands after contact with animals or their environments.
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked pork.
- Consume only pasteurized milk and milk products, such as cheese, ice cream, and yogurt.
- After handling raw chitlins, thoroughly scrub hands with soap and water.
- Prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen by using a designated cutting board for raw meat, and carefully cleaning all kitchen surfaces and utensils with hot water and soap after preparing raw meat.
- Dispose of animal poop in a sanitary manner.