

# IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

## YERSINIOSIS

Yersiniosis is an infection of the intestines caused by bacteria called *Yersinia enterocolitica* and *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis*. Yersiniosis is not a very frequent cause of diarrhea and abdominal pain. The disease is more common in children under 5 and adults over 60 years of age, and occurs more frequently in the winter.

### Symptoms

Symptoms of infection usually start 3 to 7 days after exposure and include:

- Watery or bloody diarrhea
- Abdominal pain (sometimes more on the left side; may be confused with appendicitis)
- Fever
- Nausea and vomiting
- Occasionally, complications like rash, joint pain, or spread of bacteria to the bloodstream can occur.
- The illness may last several days up to a few weeks and might require hospitalization.
- Sometimes people have no symptoms, yet carry the bacteria in their stool (poop).

### Transmission

- Infection usually comes from contaminated food, especially raw or undercooked pork products. People can also get sick from handling raw pork products, such as chitterlings.
- Animals can carry yersiniosis, especially pigs, kittens, puppies, and birds. Occasionally, people become sick after contact with infected animals.
- Drinking contaminated unpasteurized milk or untreated water can also transmit the infection.
- Rarely, the organism is transmitted through contaminated blood during a transfusion.
- Infected people who do not wash their hands well after using the bathroom can spread the infection to other people.

### Treatment

- The bacteria can be identified from a stool or sometimes blood sample.
- A doctor may treat yersiniosis with antibiotics, depending upon the patient's medical condition. People who have not taken an antibiotic treatment may have the bacteria in their stool for 2 to 3 months, even if they have no symptoms.

### Prevention

- Wash hands well after handling animals or raw meat, and before preparing food or eating. Cook all meat thoroughly and avoid contaminating other food with raw meat juices.
- Wash hands well after going to the bathroom and changing diapers. Discard soiled diapers properly.
- Dispose of human, dog, and cat feces properly.
- Drink and use only pasteurized milk.

### Additional Information

People who attend child care centers or who work in food service, patient care, or child care need to stay home until their diarrhea has ceased. People who handle food at work need to have two stool samples tested that do not have yersinia bacteria in them.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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