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# Understanding Yersiniosis

Yersiniosis is a foodborne illness. It causes inflammation in the small intestine and colon. It's more common in children.

## How to say it

yuhr-sin-ee-O-sis

## What causes yersiniosis?

Yersiniosis is caused by Yersinia bacteria. You can get it if you eat food or drink water contaminated with the bacteria. Foods and water can become contaminated by the feces of infected animals. The most common food sources include:

- Raw or undercooked pork
- Milk and other dairy products
- Raw vegetables, such as lettuce or carrots

You can also get yersiniosis if you have close contact with infected animals, such as pigs or rodents. Handling and cooking foods such as pork safely can prevent it. Always use good handwashing techniques. Keep utensils and cutting surfaces clean with soap and water. Good handwashing is especially important when preparing such items as tripe and chitlins. Yersiniosis can be spread to babies and children when contaminated hands touch bottles, pacifiers, and toys.

Here are tips to prevent yersiniosis:

- Wash hands with soap and water before eating and preparing food, after contact with animals and their feces, and after handling raw meat.
- Wash your hands well after handling raw chitlins. Young children are at high risk for yersiniosis, so wash your hands well before touching babies or their toys, bottles, or other baby items.
- Don't eat raw or undercooked pork. Cook ground pork to at least 160°F (71°C). Cook fresh pork to at least 145°F (63°C).
- Drink only pasteurized milk and milk products.
- Use separate cutting boards for meat and other foods. Clean all cutting boards, counter tops, and utensils with soap and hot water or a bleach-based cleaner after preparing raw meat.

## What are the symptoms of yersiniosis?

The symptoms of yersiniosis often take a few days to a week to appear after an infection. They are often mild. But they can last 2 to 3 weeks. Sometimes people have symptoms lasting up to 1 year. They may include:

- Fever

- Diarrhea, which may sometimes be bloody
- Nausea and vomiting
- Pain in the lower right side, which may be confused with appendicitis
- Sore throat
- Rash
- Headache
- Joint and muscle pain

Yersiniosis may also cause problems with the heart, eyes, liver, and kidneys. This is more likely to happen in people with a weak immune system.

## How is yersiniosis treated?

There is no vaccine to prevent yersiniosis. But most people get better within a couple weeks. Treatments include:

- **Rest.** You may feel better faster if you get plenty of rest.
- **Fluids.** Drinking lots of fluids will help you stay hydrated. Don't drink alcohol or beverages with caffeine.
- **Medicine.** Antibiotics can kill the bacteria. But they are usually used in only severe cases.

## What are the complications of yersiniosis?

Most complications from yersiniosis are rare. They may include:

- Painful red lumps under the skin (erythema nodosum)
- Arthritis
- Stomach and digestive problems
- Blood poisoning

## When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Pain that gets worse
- Symptoms that don't get better or get worse
- New symptoms