



Yersinia

Facts about Yersinia

Yersinia is a disease caused by a bacterium. There are many types of Yersinia. This information is about the type that causes diarrhea and/or vomiting. This type is called *Yersinia enterocolitica*. More children than adults become infected with the disease. Infection is also more common in the winter.

Some important things to know about Yersinia infection are:

- Yersinia can cause a wide variety of symptoms, depending on the infected person’s age. Common symptoms of Yersinia in children can include fever, abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhea, which is often bloody. In older children and adults, right-sided abdominal pain and fever may be the most common symptoms. Sometimes, Yersinia is confused with appendicitis.
- Symptoms usually develop 4 to 7 days after exposure and may last 1 to 3 weeks or longer.
- In a small number of cases, complications such as skin rash, joint pains, or spread of bacteria to the bloodstream can occur.

The Spread of Yersinia

Yersinia can be spread by the following:



- Eating or drinking the following:
 - Contaminated food, especially raw or undercooked pork products (most common cause)
 - Drinking or eating contaminated, unpasteurized milk, or milk products such as cheese
 - Eating contaminated tofu
 - Drinking untreated water
- The preparation of raw pork intestines (chitterlings) may be particularly risky.
- Not washing your hands well after handling raw, uncooked pork and then handling an infant or his/her toys, bottles or pacifiers.
- Coming into contact with infected people and animals, such as puppies, kittens and pigs.

Treatment for Yersinia

Most cases of diarrhea due to Yersinia usually go away on their own without antibiotic treatment. However, in more severe infections, antibiotics may be useful.

Long-term symptoms of Yersinia

If you are infected with Yersinia, there is a **small chance** you might develop joint pain, most commonly in the knees, ankles or wrists. The joint pain usually develops one month after first having diarrhea and ends after 1 to 6 months. A skin rash called “erythema nodosum” may also appear on the legs and trunk. This rash is more common in women and usually goes away within a month.



If you are infected with Yersinia:

Do not prepare or serve food.

If you have diarrhea, do not go to work in:

- food service
- childcare settings
- healthcare provider offices

How to protect yourself and your family from Yersinia

Food—proper cooking of food completely kills Yersinia

- Cook foods completely and use a thermometer. Do not eat meat that is pink in the middle.
- Keep uncooked meats and their raw juices/marinades away from other foods that will not be cooked.
- Do not use the same dishes for raw and cooked foods.
- Thoroughly wash, using soap and warm water, utensils, cutting boards, work surfaces and hands after working with raw meat.
- Do not drink or eat unpasteurized milk or milk products, such as cheese.
- Don't drink untreated water.

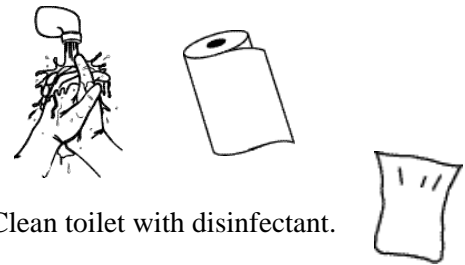
Animal Care

- Wash hands carefully with soap and warm water after cleaning up animal feces or handling animals.



How to wash hands well

- Rub both hands on the top and bottom with soap for 20 seconds.
- Use paper towels or clean terry cloth towels for drying.
- Use the paper towel to turn off the water faucet in a public place.
- Wash hands carefully after bowel movements or changing diapers. Clean toilet with disinfectant. Clean toilet handle and faucets. Keep towels clean.



Yersinia infection is a reportable illness

If you are diagnosed with Yersinia infection, your doctor will send a report to the County Health and Human Services Agency. You may be contacted to find out how you got infected. This helps prevent the illness from spreading to others.

This fact sheet includes information on Yersinia reproduced from the “Health Topics A-Z” section of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.CDC.gov. An electronic copy of this disease fact sheet and others are available at www.sdepi.org.

To report Yersinia in San Diego County, call (619) 515-6620.



County of San Diego – Health and Human Services Agency – Community Epidemiology
P.O. Box 85222, P511C-A – San Diego, CA 92186-5222