

# Yersinia

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## What is *Yersinia*?

*Yersinia* is a bacteria that generally affects the intestinal tract. Yersiniosis is not usually a serious illness for healthy adults, but can cause severe symptoms in small children.

## How do I get Yersiniosis?

*Yersinia* is usually spread through the following:

- You must ingest (swallow or eat) the *Yersinia* bacteria to become infected. People who have become infected with Yersiniosis will have the bacteria in their feces (stools). If people do not properly wash their hands after using the restroom or changing diapers, and then handle food others will eat or objects people will put in their mouths (e.g. toys), they can spread the bacteria to other people.
- Several animals pass *Yersinia* in their feces (stool) and people can get sick from contact with feces. This most commonly occurs with infected pigs.
- People can get Yersiniosis by eating raw or undercooked pork products. Chitterlings (raw pork intestines) may be particularly risky. You can also get Yersiniosis by drinking contaminated unpasteurized milk or untreated water.
- *Yersinia* is **NOT** spread from one person to another by coughing or sneezing, sharing drinks, hugging, or kissing.

## Symptoms

Symptoms begin 4 to 7 days (generally under 10 days) after ingesting the bacteria and can cause illness for 1 to 3 weeks. Symptoms vary depending on the age of the ill individual. Symptoms include:

- Muscle aches and joint pain
- Fever
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea (sometimes bloody)

## Prevention

- Avoid eating raw or undercooked pork.
- Thoroughly cook meat, especially pork, to an internal temperature of 150° F.
- Keep uncooked meats separate from other foods.
- Do not consume unpasteurized dairy products.
- Practice good hand washing before eating and preparing food, after contact with animals, and after handling raw meat.
- After handling raw chitterlings (food prepared from the small intestine of pigs), properly wash hands before touching infants, toys, bottles, or pacifiers.



### Hand washing steps:

1. Use soap and warm running water.
2. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds; use a nail brush.
3. Wash all surfaces:
  - Between fingers
  - Under fingernails
  - Back of hands
  - Wrists
4. Rinse well and dry hands with a clean paper towel.

(continued on back)

# *Yersinia* (continued)

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## Treatment for *Yersiniosis*

- Most cases recover on their own without treatment. If symptoms persist or are severe, see your health care provider.
- Do not prepare food for others.
- If your job includes handling food, direct patient care as a health care worker, or working with children, do not work and see your health care provider.
- Children who might have *Yersiniosis* should not go to child care settings – especially if they have diarrhea.