



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

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Yersiniosis

What is yersiniosis?

Yersiniosis is an infectious disease caused by a bacterium called *Yersinia*. Most human illness is caused by one species, *Y. enterocolitica*.

Infection with *Y. enterocolitica* can cause a variety of symptoms depending on the age of the person infected. Infection occurs most often in young children.

How do you get it?

You get yersiniosis by eating contaminated food, especially raw or undercooked pork. Drinking milk or water contaminated with wastes from infected persons, farm animals, or household pets (especially sick puppies and kittens) can also cause illness. Person-to-person transmission is rare.

What are the symptoms of yersiniosis?

Common symptoms in children are fever, nausea, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, which is often bloody. In older children and adults, right-sided abdominal pain and fever may be the predominant symptoms, and may be confused with appendicitis. In a small portion of cases, complications such as skin rash, joint pains, or spread of bacteria to the bloodstream can occur.

When do symptoms start?

Symptoms usually start 4 to 7 days after infection with the bacteria.

For how long is a person contagious?

An infected person is contagious for at least as long as the symptoms last. Some people with yersiniosis continue to be infectious for weeks or months, even after the diarrhea has ended.

What is the treatment for yersiniosis?

Most persons get well on their own without antibiotic treatment. Severe infections and infections in young children with diarrhea can be treated with antibiotics prescribed by a doctor.

How do you keep from getting it?

Do not eat raw or undercooked pork.

Eat and drink only pasteurized dairy products.

Wash hands with soap and water before eating and preparing food, after contact with animals, and after using the toilet.

Keep food that will be eaten raw, such as vegetables, from becoming contaminated by animal products. After handling raw meat, do not lick your fingers, touch other foods, or smoke a cigarette without washing your hands first.

Wash cutting boards thoroughly after contact with food, so that the boards do not contaminate the next food prepared.

Dispose of dog and cat wastes promptly in a sanitary manner.

Protect water supplies from animal and human feces.

For more information, see the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/yersinia/>