

What is Yersiniosis?

Yersiniosis is a disease caused by the bacterium *Yersinia enterocolitica*. It is relatively uncommon with about 10-12 cases reported in Wisconsin annually. Yersiniosis usually occurs as an isolated event however occasional outbreaks are reported due to a common exposure.

Who gets Yersiniosis?

Yersiniosis may occur in any person, but most often in young children.

How do people get infected with *Yersinia*?

Eating contaminated food, especially raw or undercooked pork products, usually causes infection in people. The preparation of chitterlings (raw pork intestines) may be particularly risky. Drinking unpasteurized milk or untreated water can also cause infection. People may occasionally become infected with *Y. enterocolitica* after contact with animals, especially pigs.

What are the symptoms of Yersiniosis?

Infection with *Y. enterocolitica* can cause a variety of symptoms depending on the age of the infected person. In younger children common symptoms are fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, often bloody. In older children and adults, lower right-sided abdominal pain and fever may be confused with appendicitis. In a small number of cases joint pains, skin rash, and blood stream infections may occur.

How soon do symptoms appear after exposure to *Y. enterocolitica* bacteria?

Symptoms typically develop from 4-7 days after exposure and may last 1- 3 weeks or longer.

Where can *Y. enterocolitica* be found?

Animals are the main source of *Y. enterocolitica*. The bacteria are passed in their feces and people get sick from contact with infected feces. Animal fecal waste contaminated water, milk, or foods and may become a source of infection for people or other animals.

What animals transmit *Y. enterocolitica*?

Pigs are the main source of infection, but other animals such as cats, dogs, horses, cows, rodents and rabbits may also carry the disease.

How long can an infected person carry *Y. enterocolitica*?

The bacteria are passed in the feces as long as the person is experiencing symptoms. For untreated cases the bacteria may be passed for 2-3 months.

How can *Y. enterocolitica* infections be treated?

Uncomplicated cases due to *Y. enterocolitica* usually resolve on their own without antibiotic treatment. In more severe or complicated infections, antibiotic treatment may be useful.

How can *Y. enterocolitica* infections be prevented?

Avoid eating raw or undercooked pork, avoid drinking unpasteurized milk or untreated drinking water and practice good hand washing after contact with animals.