



## **Education**

### **Yersiniosis**

#### **What is yersiniosis?**

Yersiniosis is an uncommon bacterial infection in the intestine that is usually severe. The illness that it causes is sometimes confused with acute appendicitis.

#### **How does it occur?**

The infection is caused by Yersinia bacteria. Most often people become infected by eating contaminated food, especially raw or undercooked pork products. You can also become infected by drinking unpasteurized milk or untreated water (such as well water) that has been contaminated with the bacteria. Sometimes the infection occurs after contact with infected animals.

The time between exposure to the infection and illness is usually 3 to 7 days.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

Symptoms may include:

- abdominal pain
- fever
- diarrhea, which may be bloody
- vomiting.

Other possible symptoms include:

- swollen or painful joints
- redness and painful growths on the lower part of the legs.

#### **How is it diagnosed?**

Your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and examine you. Your provider will use a swab to get a sample of bowel movement. The sample will be sent to a lab for tests.

#### **How is it treated?**

Your provider will prescribe an antibiotic. Make sure that you take all of your medicine as prescribed, even after you start feeling better.

Until you have completely recovered:

- Avoid contact with others and practice good hand washing.
  - Rest in bed or otherwise limit your activities until fever and weakness are gone.
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### **How long do the effects last?**

The duration of symptoms varies from person to person.

### **How can I take care of myself?**

Follow the treatment your health care provider prescribes.

For fever:

- Ask your provider if you can take aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen to help control fever and aches.
- Keep a daily record of your temperature.

For diarrhea:

- You may want to let your bowel rest for a few hours by drinking only clear liquids such as water, weak tea, bouillon, apple juice, or sports drinks or other oral rehydrating solutions. You may also drink soft drinks without caffeine (such as 7 UP) after letting them lose some of their carbonation (go flat). Make sure you drink often so you do not become dehydrated. Becoming dehydrated can be very dangerous, especially for children, older adults, and some people who have other medical problems. Suck on ice chips or Popsicles if you feel too nauseated to drink fluids.
- It is OK to keep eating as long as it does not seem to worsen the diarrhea or stomach cramps. Foods that are easiest to digest are soft starchy foods, such as bananas, cooked cereal, rice, plain noodles, eggs, plain gelatin, toast or bread with jelly, and applesauce. Avoid milk products for a few days. Return to your normal diet after 2 or 3 days, but for several days avoid fresh fruit (other than bananas), alcohol, greasy or fatty foods such as cheeseburgers or bacon, highly seasoned or spicy foods, and most fresh vegetables. Cooked carrots, potatoes, and squash are fine. If eating seems to worsen the diarrhea, let your bowel rest for a few hours by drinking just clear liquids.

If you have cramps or stomach pain, you may want to use a hot water bottle or an electric heating pad set on low.

### **What can I do to help prevent yersiniosis?**

- Avoid eating raw or undercooked pork.
- Drink only pasteurized milk or milk products.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before eating and preparing food, after contact with animals, and after handling raw meat.
- Use separate cutting boards for meat and other foods. Carefully clean all cutting boards, countertops, and utensils with soap and hot water after preparing raw meat.
- Dispose of animal feces in a sanitary manner.

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