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FACT SHEET

Yersinia Infection

Cause: Yersiniosis (yer-SIN-ee-O-sis) is a disease caused by the bacterium *Yersinia enterocolitica*. There are three main types of yersiniosis that affect people. *Yersinia enterocolitica* is the one that is responsible for most infections in the United States. The infection seems to be more common in cooler climates. People with Yersiniosis can have different symptoms depending on their age.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/yersinia/>

Spread: Some animals pass *Yersinia enterocolitica* in their feces (stool) and people can get sick from contact with infected feces. Several kinds of animals can carry this disease, but usually people get sick from pigs that are sick with yersiniosis. Other animals that can carry this disease include cats, dogs, horses, cows, rodents, and rabbits. People can also get yersiniosis by eating pork that is not cooked completely or by drinking contaminated milk. Infants can be infected when a parent or caretaker handles contaminated food without thoroughly washing hands with soap and water before handling the baby's toys, bottles, or pacifiers.

Symptoms: Young children usually have fever, stomach pain, and diarrhea. Adults do not get sick with yersiniosis as often, but they can feel pain on their right side and may have a fever. Usually, these signs go away after about 3 weeks but sometimes pain in joints, such as knees or wrists, can start after that and last for several months.

Incubation: People can start to get sick 4 to 7 days after infection and can be sick for 1 to 3 weeks. *Yersinia enterocolitica* infections are usually determined by testing stool samples; other sites less often tested are the throat, lymph nodes, joint fluid, urine, bile, and blood.

Precautions:

- Avoid eating raw or undercooked pork.
- Consume only pasteurized milk or milk products.
- Wash hands with soap and running water before eating and preparing food, after contact with animals, and after handling raw meat.
- After handling raw chitterlings (food prepared from small intestine of pigs), clean hands and fingernails thoroughly with soap and water before touching infants or their toys, bottles, or pacifiers.

Someone other than the food handler should care for children while chitterlings are being prepared.

- Prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen: Use separate cutting boards for meat and other foods, and 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.

Diagnosis and Treatment:

Stool cultures are used to determine if the organism is present. Uncomplicated cases of diarrhea from this bacterium usually resolve without any antibiotic treatment, although in severe cases antibiotics may be useful.