

# Yersiniosis

## Community and Public Health

Phone: 03 364 1777

Fax: 03 379 6484

Web: [www.cph.co.nz](http://www.cph.co.nz)

### What is Yersiniosis?

Yersiniosis is an infection of the bowel or sometimes the blood caused by yersinia bacteria.

### What are the symptoms and effects?

Symptoms include:

- fever
- headache
- diarrhoea
- stomach pains (often severe and can be confused with appendicitis)
- nausea
- vomiting
- joint pain in some cases.

These symptoms may develop between 1 and 11 days (usually 3-7 days) after swallowing the bacteria. The symptoms may last 2-3 days but it can be up to 3 weeks.

### How long is someone infectious?

People are usually infectious for 2 - 3 weeks from when the diarrhoea started; sometimes the bacteria are shed for a few months if untreated.

### How is it treated?

Often no treatment is required, but a person with diarrhoea should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. If symptoms persist or become severe seek medical advice. Complications need special treatment and in some cases, antibiotic treatment may be indicated.

### How do people become infected?

People become infected when they swallow the bacteria. This can happen as a result of:

- Eating food that has been contaminated . Yersinia has been found in pork and other meat, unpasteurised dairy products, fruit, vegetables, tofu, pastries and sandwiches.
- Drinking from an untreated water supply (e.g. tank or bore water).
- Contact with an infected person.
- Contact with infected household pets (particularly sick puppies or kittens), farm animals (especially pigs) and birds.

### How can infection be prevented?

#### Hand washing

Wash hands thoroughly in soapy water and dry them thoroughly:

- Before preparing food and eating
- After using the toilet, gardening, changing nappies or touching pets or other animals.
- Children on farms need to be reminded to wash their hands regularly.

#### Food handling

- Prepare food using clean utensils, cutting boards and benches.
- Carefully wash all fruit and vegetables before eating them.
- Reheat food until it is piping hot.
- Cook all food thoroughly, especially pork.
- Keep raw meat separate from raw fruit and vegetables and cooked foods during preparation and cover meat that is being stored.
- Store raw meat at the bottom of the fridge to prevent any juices dripping onto other foods.
- Use a separate cutting board for preparing raw meat.
- Thoroughly clean all knives, cutting boards and other surfaces after contact with any raw meat by scrubbing in hot soapy water or washing in a dishwasher.
- Thaw frozen meat in the refrigerator or defrost in the microwave.
- Only consume pasteurised dairy products.
- Boil untreated water (from streams, rivers, roof water etc.) for 1 minute before drinking.
- If you have your own water supply protect it from animal and bird faeces. It may be necessary to chlorinate the supply. Boil water if you are unsure whether or not it is safe.

**People who have recently had yersiniosis should not donate blood for at least three months because the bacteria can be spread through infected blood.**

### Staying away from preschool, school and work

- Anyone with diarrhoea should remain away from preschool/school/work.
- Infected people involved in food preparation, health care, looking after children, or those at risk of spreading the disease because of a disability or health condition should not return to work until they have been symptom free for 48 hours.

Acknowledgement:  
Public Health South  
Southern District Health Board