



Yersiniosis

What is it?

Yersiniosis is an illness caused by bacteria called yersinia enterocolitica. These bacteria live in several different kinds of animals, but are mostly found in the throats of pigs.

How is it spread?

People usually become infected with the bacteria by eating raw or undercooked pork that is contaminated. Drinking tainted water and unpasteurized milk can also cause this illness. Finally, handling infected dogs, cats, rabbits, farm animals or food and not washing hands thoroughly can cause people to get sick.

What does it look like?

Symptoms develop three to seven days after eating infected food and may last for one to three weeks. For infants and small children, the main symptoms are diarrhea, fever and stomach ache. For older children and adults, the symptoms include very bad stomach cramps, diarrhea, fever and soreness of the lower right stomach area. Treatment with antibiotics is common for more serious cases.

If food handlers, health care and day care workers are suffering from yersiniosis, they must stay home from work until the diarrhea has stopped.

How can yersiniosis be prevented?

- Thorough cooking of meats to proper minimum internal temperatures; pork products (other than ground) to 150° F (66° C), ground pork to 155° F (68° C), poultry 165° F (74° C), cuts such as beef, veal, lamb roasts to 145° F (63° C).
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked pork.
- Consume only pasteurized milk and milk products.
- Thoroughly wash hands with warm soapy water after handling raw pork, using the washroom, playing with pets and before carrying out any type of food handling.
- Ensure water supplies are protected from contamination and are safe to drink.
- Prevent cross contamination in the kitchen by using separate cutting boards for cooked and raw meat, cleaning and sanitizing all surfaces and utensils with bleach and water after preparing raw meat.
- Dispose of animal feces in a sanitary manner.

Yersiniosis must be reported to the Medical Officer of Health as required by the Health Protection and Promotion Act.



For more information, please contact a member of Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit's Infectious Disease Team.

Updated July 2011.



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