



Yersinia enterocolitica (*Y. enterocolitica*)

What is it?

- Yersiniosis is a relatively uncommon infection contracted through the consumption of undercooked meat products, unpasteurised milk, or water contaminated by the bacteria.
- Usually, someone with an infection caused by Yersinia bacteria recovers within a few days without medical treatment (in some cases, doctors prescribe antibiotics).

Where is it found?

- The major animal reservoir for *Y. enterocolitica* strains that cause human illness is pigs.
- Pathogenic strains of *Y. enterocolitica* have also been isolated in milk products and vegetables, and in water and soil.
- In humans, *Y. enterocolitica* infection generally occurs through the ingestion of foods or water contaminated with the bacterium.
- On rare occasions, it can be transmitted via the faecal-oral route from one person to another.

Why is it a problem?

- Symptoms of yersiniosis include fever, abdominal pain and diarrhoea, and typically persist for one to three weeks, but may last for several months.
- Occasionally, some persons develop joint pain, most commonly in the knees, ankles or wrists. These joint pains usually develop about one month after the initial episode of diarrhoea and generally resolve after one to six months.

- A skin rash, called erythema nodosum may also appear on the legs and body, mostly in women. In most cases, erythema nodosum resolves spontaneously within a month.
- Other complications include septicaemia and meningitis, which may result in further complications.

Who is at risk?

- Infection with *Y. enterocolitica* occurs most often in children.
- Most extra-intestinal manifestations of yersiniosis are more frequently found in adults than in children.
- Septicaemia is seen almost exclusively in individuals with underlying disease.

How can the risk be reduced?

- Avoid eating raw or undercooked pork; pork should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 72°C.
- Consume only pasteurised milk/milk products and only drink/use treated water.
- Wash hands before eating and preparing food, after contact with animals, and after handling raw meat.
- Prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen.