

# Yersiniosis

## What is yersiniosis

Yersiniosis is a bacterial infection that is caused by *Yersinia enterocolitica* or *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis*.

## How is it spread?

Spread can occur by eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated by the Yersinia bacteria, especially raw or undercooked pork products. The environment may be contaminated by a range of animals but pigs are considered to be the main source of human infection.

## Signs and symptoms

The symptoms usually develop between 3 to 7 days after exposure.

Symptoms include diarrhoea (sometimes with blood, especially in infants), vomiting, fever, abdominal pain and in some cases, a sore throat. In older children and adults yersiniosis can sometimes cause abdominal pain similar to appendicitis. Joint pain or arthritis can occur a few weeks later in about half of adult cases. Other symptoms include skin lesions and inflammation of the eye.

## Infectious period

It is rare for the yersiniosis infection to be passed on to others. Bacteria will usually be present in faeces for 2-3 weeks after diarrhoea commences but may be up to 2-3 months.

Anyone with diarrhoea should not cook or prepare food for others.

## Who is at risk?

Anyone can get yersiniosis but most cases are seen in young children and people with exposures to pigs or pork.

## Treatment

Antibiotics are not required for mild cases, but are used for severe or blood stream infections.

Anyone with diarrhoea should drink extra fluids to avoid dehydration. Children with diarrhoea, who vomit or who refuse extra fluids should see a doctor. Anyone with prolonged or severe diarrhoea or who has symptoms causing concern should see a doctor.

Medicines to prevent vomiting or diarrhoea should not be given, especially to children, except when prescribed by a doctor.

## Prevention

- do not eat raw or undercooked pork
- after handling raw pork, clean hands and fingernails with soap and water before touching infants or their toys, bottles or pacifiers
- wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after contact with animals, particularly pigs • avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw foods and ready-to-eat foods separate. Use separate knives, utensils and equipment
- keep all kitchen surfaces and equipment clean and wash immediately after handling raw meat or poultry
- only drink pasteurised milk or milk products
- keep raw meat in the freezer until it is used, because bacteria can multiply in normal refrigerators

## How can it be controlled?

Anyone with diarrhoea should not attend childcare/school until 24hrs after their last loose bowel motion. Food handlers should not return to work until 48 hours after diarrhoea has ceased.

Anyone with diarrhoea should not swim, wade or paddle in public pools.

Doctors and public health workers are interested in preventing outbreaks of diarrhoea. If there are 2 or more cases of diarrhoea in a group or any cases in food handlers, these should be reported to the local Centre for Disease Control.

## Contact

For more information contact the Centre for Disease Control in your region.

The full list of contacts of contacts can be found at [NT Health](#).

Location	Address	Phone	Fax	Email
Darwin	Ground Floor, Building 4 Royal Darwin Hospital Rocklands Drive Tiwi NT 0810	(08) 8922 8044 1800 008 002	(08) 8922 8310	<a href="mailto:CDCSurveillance.DARWIN@nt.gov.au">CDCSurveillance.DARWIN@nt.gov.au</a>
Katherine	O'Keef House Katherine Hospital Gorge Road Katherine NT 0850	(08) 8973 9049	(08) 8973 9048	<a href="mailto:CDC.Katherine@nt.gov.au">CDC.Katherine@nt.gov.au</a>
Tennant Creek	Schmidt Street Tennant Creek NT 0860	(08) 8962 4259		<a href="mailto:CDC.Barkly@nt.gov.au">CDC.Barkly@nt.gov.au</a>
Alice Springs	Disease Control Unit Lower Ground Floor Eurilpa House, 25 Todd Street Alice Springs NT 0870	(08) 8951 7540	(08) 8951 7900	<a href="mailto:CDC.alicesprings@nt.gov.au">CDC.alicesprings@nt.gov.au</a>
Nhulunbuy	Corner Mathew Flinders Way and Chesterfield Court Nhulunbuy NT 0880	(08) 8987 0357	(08) 8987 0500	<a href="mailto:CDCGove.DoH@nt.gov.au">CDCGove.DoH@nt.gov.au</a>

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