



What is Yersinia?

Yersinia is a bacteria that causes an infection of the bowel. It is commonly caught from eating contaminated or poorly handled food. Other sources are infected household pets and farm animals - especially pigs. Untreated water or an infected person who handles food can also spread Yersinia bacteria.

What are the symptoms?

Around 3 - 7 days after contact with the bacteria flu-like symptoms develop. Diarrhoea then develops, with severe abdominal pain. Nausea, vomiting and fever often occur. Yersinia infection usually lasts for 2 or 3 days, but can last for up to 3 weeks. Sometimes joint pains can develop. In a few people these are severe and disabling.

How is it treated?

Usually extra fluid and rest are advised. However, a doctor should always be consulted and may recommend antibiotic treatment in selected cases.

How is it spread?

People become infected when they swallow the bacteria. This can happen:

- When handling food, especially undercooked pork or other meat, smallgoods or unpasteurised milk
- When drinking from an unchlorinated water supply (eg tank or bore water)
- From contact with domestic or farm animals (including birds)
- From contact with infected people, including children and babies.

How to prevent it?

Wash hands carefully:

- After going to the toilet or changing nappies
- Before handling food
- After touching uncooked poultry or meat
- After playing or working with domestic animals or pets.

Look after food carefully:

- Thaw frozen meat completely
- Cook meat and poultry thoroughly
- Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods in the refrigerator.
- Store raw foods underneath cooked foods to prevent contamination
- Clean knives, cutting boards and other surfaces after contact with raw meat and poultry.

Toi Te Ora Our Environment

Our Responsibility



Remember

- Wash your hands:
 - After going to the toilet
 - After playing or working with animals
 - Before handling food
 - After touching raw meat or chicken
 - After contact with animal manure
- Always prepare food carefully
- Don't handle food if you have diarrhoea - it may spread
- Don't donate blood within 3 months of suffering from Yersinia as it can be transmitted through blood transfusions
- Don't work in close contact with infants, the very elderly or very ill people until diarrhoea has completely stopped.

For more information contact a Health Protection Officer at Toi Te Ora Public Health Service, free phone 0800 221 555.