

Yersiniosis

Definition:

Yersiniosis is caused by bacteria called *Yersinia enterocolitica*.

Signs and symptoms:

Signs and symptoms vary depending on the age of the person infected. Common symptoms in children are fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, which is often bloody. Older children and adults may get right-sided abdominal pain and fever, which could be confused with appendicitis. In few cases, complications such as skin rash, joint pains, or spread of bacteria to the bloodstream can occur. Symptoms start 4 to 7 days after infection and last 1 to 3 weeks or longer.

Transmission:

The bacteria are spread by eating contaminated food, especially raw or undercooked pork, or by handling raw chitterlings (pig intestines), which are commonly called chitlins. Drinking contaminated unpasteurized milk or untreated water can also transmit the bacterium. Infection may occur after contact with infected animals, or it can be spread from one person's stool or soiled fingers to another person's mouth.

Diagnosis:

Yersiniosis is diagnosed by growing *Y. enterocolitica* bacteria from a stool sample.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Promote proper hand washing particularly before eating and preparing food, after contact with animals, and after handling raw meat.
- Teach students and staff about the risks of eating raw or undercooked pork and unpasteurized milk or milk products.
- If a case of yersiniosis occurs in a kindergarten or preschool class, or a class where hygiene may not be optimal, more stringent control measures may be needed.
- Notification letters and fact sheets should be distributed to parents and guardians in certain situations - for example, a case handles food for other students. Work with Maine CDC to determine the need for a letter.

Treatment Recommendations

- This disease may be treated with antibiotics.

Exclusions

Children and staff with diarrhea should be excluded until diarrhea resolves. This is a recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Reporting Requirements

Yersiniosis should be reported to Maine CDC within 48 hours of recognition or strong suspicion of disease.

Resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Yersiniosis, <http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/yersinia/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. FoodNet. <http://www.cdc.gov/foodnet/>