

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
2019 - PAHAN-452-07-19 - ADV
Yersinia Infections in Northeastern Pennsylvania



DATE:	July 19, 2019
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Rachel Levine, MD, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	<i>Yersinia Infections in Northeastern Pennsylvania</i>
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	Statewide
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a “Health Advisory” provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, INFECTION CONTROL, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL
EMS COUNCILS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE
FQHCs: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE
LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE
PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Summary

- An outbreak of yersiniosis cases in northeastern Pennsylvania focused in Wayne County is being investigated.
- Milk from Creamworks Creamery in Waymart, PA is the suspected source.
- Health care providers should consider *Yersinia enterocolitica* in the differential diagnosis for patients who present with gastroenteritis or abdominal pain with recent travel to northeastern Pennsylvania or who have reported drinking milk from Creamworks Creamery.

BACKGROUND ON INVESTIGATION

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture is investigating an outbreak of cases of yersiniosis in northeastern Pennsylvania focused in Wayne County. Milk from Creamworks Creamery in Waymart, PA is suspected as the source and control measures are being implemented. At present, PADOH is investigating 17 laboratory-confirmed illnesses due to *Yersinia enterocolitica*, and numerous additional reports of gastroenteritis. Known illness onsets range from June 17 through July 15, but it is possible the problem existed prior to June 17.

WHEN TO CONSIDER YERSINIOSIS FOR YOUR PATIENT

Yersiniosis is a relatively infrequent cause of foodborne illness and outbreaks have been rare in Pennsylvania. Therefore, clinicians may be unfamiliar with the signs and symptoms of yersiniosis. PADOH encourages health care providers and laboratories in northeastern

Pennsylvania to consider *Yersinia enterocolitica* in the differential diagnosis for patients who present with gastroenteritis or with an apparent acute abdomen.

Clinical manifestations most commonly include:

- Diarrhea (sometimes bloody)
- Abdominal pain
- Fever

Yersinia infection can mimic appendicitis, and complications of *Yersinia* can include perforated bowel or ulcerating ileitis and colitis, as well as a variety of extra-intestinal manifestations such as septic arthritis. Pharyngitis is also sometimes seen, as the organism has a predilection for lymphatic tissue.

Incubation period:

- Typically 4–7 days (range 1–14 days)

Duration of illness:

- 1–3 weeks or longer

The onset of yersiniosis can be more insidious than other foodborne pathogens, and patients may not present for care until several days into illness. Post-infectious sequelae can include erythema nodosum and reactive arthritis.

LABORATORY TESTING FOR YERSINIA ENTEROCOLITICA

If laboratories are conducting PCR testing on stool, any *Yersinia* positive samples should be reflexed to culture for confirmation. Isolates should be sent to public health authorities for further investigation.

Routine stool or blood cultures may not detect *Yersinia*, since it grows poorly on the media typically used for pathogens such as *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, and *Campylobacter*. Selective growth medium and incubation temperatures may be necessary to isolate or identify *Yersinia* species. Therefore, stool culture requests should specifically include *Yersinia* testing when indicated. *Yersinia* grow best at an incubation temperature of 25 degrees Celsius.

REPORTING TO PADOH

PADOH requests that any suspected cases of *Yersinia* infection be reported to your local health department or the Pennsylvania Department of Health (1-877-PA-HEALTH). In addition, any isolate of *Y. enterocolitica* from Northeastern PA should be forwarded to the Pennsylvania Department of Health Bureau of Laboratories for confirmation and further identification.

A fact sheet regarding yersiniosis epidemiology, diagnosis, and treatment can be found at <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Yersinia%20enterocolitica.pdf> and <https://www.cdc.gov/yersinia/index.html>.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of July 19, 2019 but may be modified in the future.