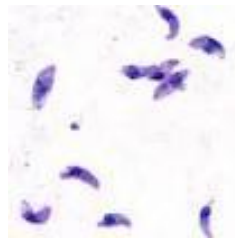


Toxoplasmosis



What is Toxoplasmosis?

Toxoplasmosis is a disease that pets may pass onto the unborn baby. Toxoplasmosis is an infection with a parasite called *Toxoplasma Gondii* which infects warm blooded animals including humans. Usually it causes no symptoms, and many people will already have come into contact with this parasite without knowing it, and will have built up immunity. It can however cause serious disease in unborn babies. Fortunately this is rare, but pregnant women should follow simple precautions to minimize the risks of infection.

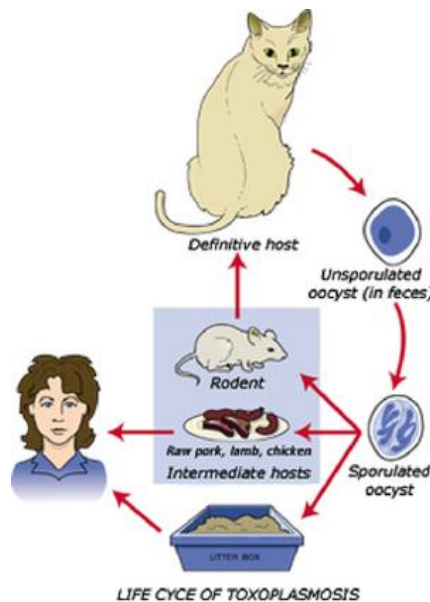


Toxoplasmosis Gondii

How do you get Toxoplasmosis?

You can get Toxoplasmosis by:

- eating contaminated raw or partly cooked meat
- using contaminated food utensils that have been in contact with raw meat
- contact with infected cat faeces
- consuming contaminated drinking water.



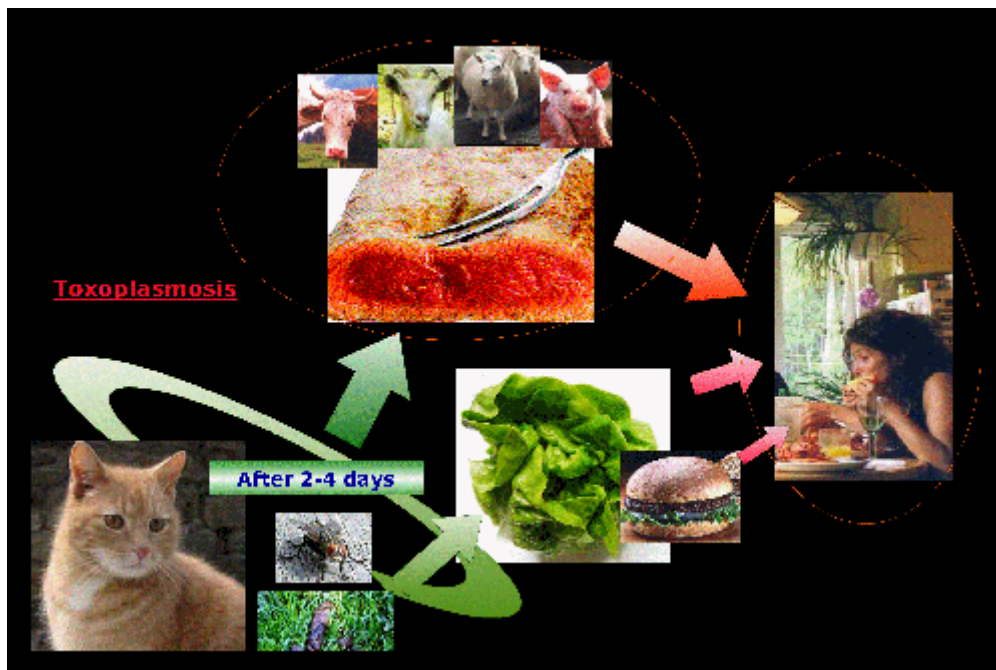


Should I get rid of the cat?

There is absolutely no need to surrender your cat because you are pregnant. By following some simple guidelines you will be able to minimize any risk. You are at far greater risk of catching toxoplasmosis from inadequate food preparation and under cooking meat than you are from your cat. According to a European Study in the British Medical Journal, the risk of your baby getting toxoplasmosis from your cat is approximately 1 in 1,000,000.

How can you avoid Toxoplasmosis?

You can avoid Toxoplasmosis by avoiding cat faeces, minimize the contact with possible contaminated objects (trays and litter), give your cat no raw meat, keep up a great kitchen hygiene and be carefull with cooking and preparing meat.



Avoid Cat Faeces

Generally the key areas you may come into contact with cat faeces are the litter tray and soil in the garden. To avoid contamination:

- You need to avoid hand to mouth contact.
- Ensure the trays are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected at least daily. It takes about 24 hours for the infected faeces to become contagious.
- Carefully pour litter into a plastic bag, tie it up and place into the bin.
- Wash the tray with very hot water and detergent.
- Leave the cleaning of the trays to your partner and ensure they also practice good hygiene.

No contact means minimized risk!

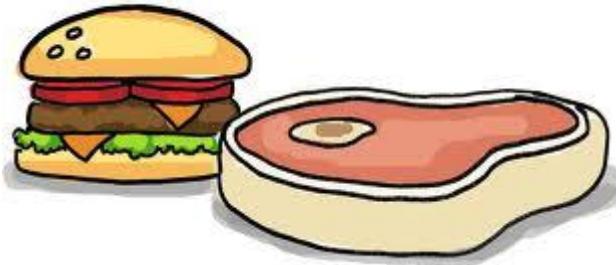
If the pregnant lady has to clean the trays: use rubber gloves. Also wear gloves when you are going to be handling any types of soil or sand. All cats will use sand and soil as their outdoor toilet trays. The risk of handling contaminated faeces is higher because you are not disposing within the initial 24 hour period and it can remain contagious in the soil for months.

Always wash your hands thoroughly after gardening, cleaning trays or handling your cat.

Avoid feeding your cat raw meat

The parasite can be carried in raw meat. Make sure that all meat is cooked thoroughly (until the juices run clear) because the parasite cannot survive at high temperatures so this is very important! Good quality commercial pet foods are a good alternative.

Prepare your food hygienically and also cook all meats thoroughly. Freezing will also generally kill the cysts. You are at much greater risk of getting toxoplasmosis from the consumption of inadequately prepared and under cooked foods than from your cat.



Kitchen hygiene is a must

- Always wash hands thoroughly prior to preparing foods.
- Always wash utensils/ boards thoroughly which have come into contact with uncooked foods.
- Thoroughly wash all vegetables prior to cooking and eating.

Preparing and cooking meat

- Avoid handling or eating uncooked or undercooked meats, or use disposable gloves.
- Cook all meats thoroughly to an internal temperature of 160 degrees.
- Fluids from the meat should be clear.

If you are still concerned

If you are still concerned, consider a blood test prior to or during pregnancy. This will help to determine the level of risk.

