

Toxoplasmosis

What is Toxoplasmosis?

Toxoplasmosis is an infection caused by a parasite called *Toxoplasma gondii*. For most, toxoplasmosis is not a dangerous infection and people recover with no treatment. If a pregnant woman becomes infected and passes the infection on to the developing baby, it could result in miscarriage or birth defects.

For additional information on Toxoplasmosis and Pregnancy refer to the Middlesex-London Health Unit factsheet *Toxoplasmosis and Pregnancy*.

How does a person get infected with Toxoplasmosis?

A person can become infected with Toxoplasmosis by

Eating the parasite eggs. People can consume the parasite eggs by eating unwashed fruits or vegetables, eating with contaminated hands, eating anything that has touched cat feces from an infected cat.

Eating the meat of an infected animal (especially pork, lamb and venison) that is not fully cooked or has not been previously frozen.

Fetal infection. Developing babies can be infected if a woman becomes infected during pregnancy. If you have already developed immunity to toxoplasmosis before pregnancy, you cannot get infected again or pass the infection on to your developing baby.

What are the symptoms?

A person infected with the parasite may or may not show symptoms. Symptoms may include fever, sore throat, swollen glands, muscle pain and general illness.

Is Toxoplasmosis contagious?

Toxoplasmosis is not contagious from person to person but the infection can be passed from a pregnant woman to her developing baby.

Prevention

- ✓ **Avoid contact with cat feces.**
 - Wear gloves and wash your hands after working in the garden.
 - Change cat litter boxes daily to avoid contact with infective eggs. Avoid cleaning litter boxes if possible during pregnancy.
 - Cover sand boxes when not in use.

- ✓ **Eat only well cooked or previously frozen meat.** Avoid dried meats, such as beef jerky.
 - Meat should be cooked to reach a temperature of:
 - Whole poultry - 82°C/180°F
 - Food mixtures that includes poultry, egg, meat or fish - 74°C/165°F
 - Pork, ground meat other than poultry - 71°C/160°F
 - Fish - 70°C/158°F

- ✓ **Wash your hands before eating and after handling raw meat,** poultry, seafood, fruits, or vegetables.

- ✓ **Wash fruits and vegetables** and/or peel the skin before eating them.

- ✓ **Wash all food preparation surfaces and then sanitize with a bleach water solution.** Use a solution of 1ml (1/4 teaspoon) of unscented household bleach to 500ml (2 cups) of water.

**For more information contact the Infectious Disease Control Team at
(519) 663-5317 ext. 2330 www.healthunit.com**

References:

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention website. "*Toxoplasmosis*" Accessed on March 12, 2010. from <http://www.cdc.gov/toxoplasmosis/factsheet.html>

Heymann, D. L. (ed.). (2008) Control of Communicable Diseases Manual (19th ed.) Washington, DC: American Public Health Association

Last modified on: March 2010