

## The Toxoplasmosis Threat

Since I was little I remember when friends of the family visited our house to advise me not to kiss my cat or touch her and then put my fingers in my mouth. The danger was called toxoplasmosis and although I was particularly young to understand what it was or why it was so serious, I felt compelled to touch my cat and then wash my hands at least before dinner.

Toxoplasmosis is a parasitic disease caused by the protozoan "Toxoplasma gondii." Animals are infected by this single-celled organism by eating infected meat and humans are in danger when they come in contact with the feces of infected animals, usually cats, or by transmission from a mother to her fetus. But the most common means of transmission to humans is raw or undercooked meat. Yet, the illness is usually minor and self-limiting. Treatments can reduce symptoms and after the first weeks of infection, the parasite rarely causes any problems in otherwise healthy adults.

According to researchers, toxoplasmosis is found all over the world and infects about 30 percent of feline population-cats are primary carriers of the disease and usually contract it from eating birds, mice and other small animals or through consuming scraps of uncooked meat-and 50 percent of the human population. Although in the adult community, the parasite rarely causes any signs or symptoms-apart from a flu-like minor ones-because the immune system is usually strong enough to control the organism, those with weakened immune systems, such those who are affected by HIV, may become seriously ill.

Experts explain that although the symptoms might be nothing more that swollen lymph glands and muscle aches and pains that can last a few weeks, the real danger is for fetuses whose mothers carry the parasite. Due to their immature immune systems, unborn children can develop brain damage or blindness from the disease and thus women, who wish to carry a baby, have to be tested with a simple blood test called a titer, in order to check if they carry the parasite or its antibodies before becoming pregnant. If her organism has not developed the necessary antibodies, then she has to go under the necessary treatment prior to pregnancy and of course take precautions to avoid coming in contact with the disease while she is going to be pregnant.

But regardless if you are planning to become pregnant or are just wondering whether or not you are carrying the parasite, there are many things that can be done to avoid this disease. Always handle raw meat while wearing gloves and all the surfaces that come in contact with the raw meat have to be disinfected directed afterwards. In addition, any meat that is going to be consumed has to be cooked thoroughly until it is not pink anymore. Because cats are the primary hosts of this parasite, women should avoid cleaning their feces barehanded and people of all ages should always remember to wash their hands after touching their cat's litter box.

After all, the advice I was given was totally true and useful. Washing hands before dinner as well as prior and after any cooking process is still one of my main concerns. If you are concerned whether you have been infected at some point and you now carry the antibodies or if the parasite is still alive in you, then you should go ahead and perform the titer test to check your current situation. Particularly if you are pregnant or if your immune system is not as strong as you would like it to be, call your doctor and find out what kind of treatment you can use in order to get rid of this disease as quickly as possible.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

### About the Author

Kadence Buchanan writes articles for <http://ipetcentral.net/> - In addition, Kadence also writes articles for <http://thetennisstop.net/> and <http://healthinformationsource.net/>