



TOXOPLASMOSIS

What is Toxoplasmosis?

Toxoplasmosis is a zoonotic disease (diseases spread from animals to people) caused by the parasite *Toxoplasma gondi*. Toxoplasmosis occurs naturally around the world, and the parasite is found in many wild animals, birds and domestic cats. Toxoplasmosis can occur in people when exposed to feces and tissues from infected animals. Toxoplasmosis is common in Canada.

What are the symptoms?

Most people do not have any symptoms. Flu-like symptoms may occur 10 to 23 days after exposure; these can include fever, sore throat, sore muscles, swollen glands and lethargy. In some cases, the eyes can be affected. People with a suppressed immune system may also develop more severe illness. Toxoplasmosis in a pregnant woman can result in severe complications to her unborn baby.

How is toxoplasmosis spread?

Toxoplasmosis develops in the muscles of infected animals. Domestic cats can also spread the parasite in their feces as eggs. People become infected by being in direct contact (or touching) eggs in cat feces, or by handling and eating infected meat that has not been properly cooked.

How is toxoplasmosis diagnosed?

Toxoplasmosis is diagnosed by symptoms, history of exposure and laboratory testing.

Who is at risk of toxoplasmosis infections?

People exposed to cat feces from pets, in soil and sandboxes or eating undercooked meat are at risk. Pregnant women and anyone with a compromised immune system should be aware that toxoplasmosis can have severe consequences.

How can toxoplasmosis be prevented?

Practise good personal hygiene. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet, after handling animals, after handling raw meats and before preparing or eating food.

Practise basic food safety precautions. Thoroughly cook all meats (meat, poultry and seafood). Prevent contact of cooked foods with raw meats or poultry.

Avoid water that might be contaminated. Do not drink untreated surface water.

Clean cat litter boxes daily and thoroughly; wash hands afterward. If you are pregnant or immune compromised, avoid cleaning litter boxes and wear gloves while gardening.

How is toxoplasmosis treated?

Most people will recover without treatment. Medication can be used to treat people with complications.

What is the Public Health response?

Public Health provides general information.

Further Information

For additional information, contact your health care provider, local [Public Health office](#), or Telecare 811.

Useful websites:

Public Health Agency of Canada

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/>