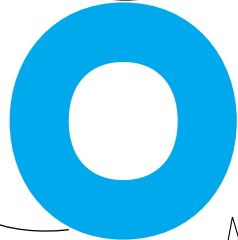
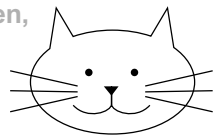


How to avoid catching toxoplasmosis

To reduce the risk of catching toxoplasmosis while you are pregnant, follow the precautions in the chart below:

Avoiding toxoplasmosis
only eat meat which has been thoroughly cooked (i.e. with no trace of blood or pinkness)
avoid raw cured meat, like Parma ham
wash hands, chopping boards and utensils thoroughly after preparing raw meat
wash all fruit and vegetables thoroughly to remove all traces of soil
don't drink unpasteurised goats' milk or eat dairy products made from it
wear gloves when gardening and wash hands and gloves afterward – if you eat while gardening wash your hands first, and try to avoid gardening in areas which may have been soiled with cat faeces
cover children's sandpits to prevent cats using them as litter boxes
remove faeces from cat litter tray every day wearing rubber gloves and wash gloves and hands afterwards – or have someone else do this
do not handle lambing ewes and do not bring lambs into the house

Cats are the only animals that can shed this parasite in their faeces. Provided precautions are taken, cats are not a particular risk to a pregnant woman. Like human adults, cats can sometimes, but not always, become sick when infected with the toxoplasmosis infection, so care of a sick cat should be left to someone else.



What is Tommy's doing to help?

Tommy's has taken over the work of The Toxoplasmosis Trust, an organisation set up to provide information and increase awareness about toxoplasmosis. We have various leaflets about toxoplasmosis which are available by contacting us on the details listed below.

Tommy's is also setting up a toxoplasmosis support network to enable those people affected by toxoplasmosis to contact others who have been in a similar situation. This will become a register of people who have had an experience with toxoplasmosis and are willing to discuss this with others to help and support them. If you are interested in learning more about this support network, please contact us on the details listed below.

About Tommy's

Tommy's, the baby charity, was launched in 1992 with a single goal: to make pregnancy and childbirth safer for both the expectant mother and her child. We fund pioneering medical research into premature birth, stillbirth and miscarriage; and aim to inform and educate all parents-to-be and their families about the best ways to have a healthy pregnancy.

To find out more about Tommy's, or to request more information about pre-pregnancy care, pregnancy health and complications, or managing a healthy pregnancy in the workplace, visit www.tommys.org, or phone our pregnancy information line: **0870 777 30 60**.

To find out how you can support Tommy's call **0870 777 76 76**.

For more information contact:

Tommy's the baby charity

Nicholas House
3 Laurence Pountney Hill
London EC4R 0BB
Tel: 08707 70 70 70
Fax: 08707 70 70 75

Pregnancy information line: 0870 777 30 60

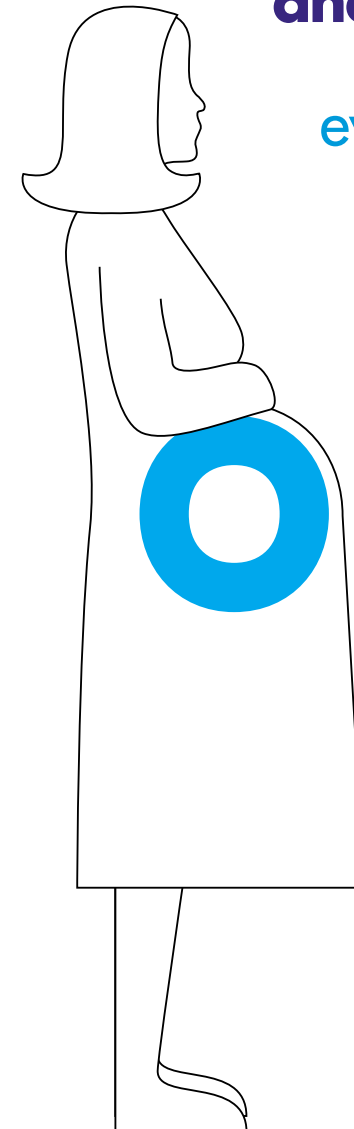
E-mail: mailbox@tommys.org
Website: www.tommys.org

© 2004 Tommy's, the baby charity
TOMMY'S THE BABY CHARITY is a registered charity no 1060508.

tommy's
THE BABY CHARITY

Toxoplasmosis and pregnancy

everything you need to know



What is toxoplasmosis?

Toxoplasmosis is an infection caused by the parasite, *Toxoplasma gondii*, a microscopic organism that can be found in meat, cat faeces, the soil where cats defecate, and in unpasteurised goats' milk.

How is it caught?

Humans can catch toxoplasmosis by ingesting anything infected with or contaminated by the parasite.

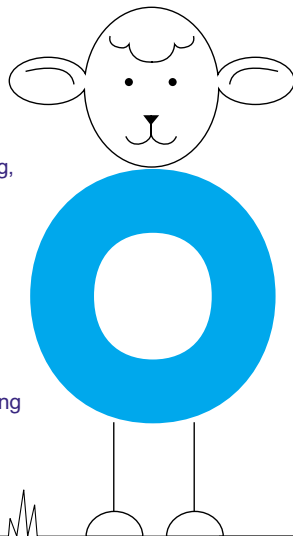
Foods that may be infected with the parasite include:

- raw or undercooked meat (i.e. meat showing any trace of pink or blood), and including raw cured meat e.g. Parma ham or salami
- unwashed vegetables and fruit contaminated with soil
- unpasteurised goats' milk and dairy products made from it
- anything which has been in contact with cat faeces or soil contaminated by cat faeces.

Who is at risk?

Anyone who eats anything infected with the parasite is at risk of catching toxoplasmosis.

Some women may be at increased risk of catching toxoplasmosis because of their job. If you are involved with farming, gardening, catering or handling animals you must take special care. Toxoplasmosis is also spread during lambing, so it's important to take extreme caution if you are involved in this industry. It is highly recommended that if you are pregnancy you avoid helping with the lambing of ewes.



How would I know if I have got it?

Toxoplasmosis doesn't usually cause any major problems in healthy adults, and in most cases a person doesn't realise they've ever had it. It isn't usually dangerous or serious and just causes minor flu-like symptoms. In more severe cases it can cause an unpleasant illness similar to glandular fever.

What we know

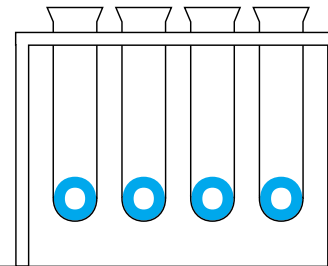
Some facts and figures:

- up to half the UK population will have the infection at some time in their lives
- it's generally accepted that once you've had toxoplasmosis you're immune for life
- a blood test can detect the toxoplasmosis infection.

Should I have a blood test for toxoplasmosis?

If you follow the precautions (overleaf) you should be protected from infection. If you think you may be at risk, you can talk to your GP, midwife or obstetrician about taking a blood test which can show if you currently have, or have ever had toxoplasmosis.

Some pregnant women will have had toxoplasmosis in the past. If you have ever had toxoplasmosis, you will be immune to the infection and your baby will not be at risk. The risk is only from an infection caught for the first time during pregnancy, or 2-3 months before conception. If your blood test is positive it will be referred to a specialist laboratory where experts find out whether the infection is past, and that you are therefore immune, or current, meaning you will be advised about further treatment options.



Why is it a problem if caught during pregnancy?

Toxoplasmosis is one of the few infections that can pass from a mother to her unborn baby and cause damage. A risk to the baby arises when the infection is caught during pregnancy or shortly before conception. The infection can cause:

- miscarriage
- stillbirth
- damage to the unborn baby's brain or other organs, particularly the eyes.

Most babies born with toxoplasmosis have no obvious damage at birth but develop symptoms, usually eye damage, during childhood and sometimes adulthood.

What can I do if I catch toxoplasmosis during pregnancy?

If you have had a blood test confirming that you have a current toxoplasma infection, you should seek counselling and advice from your GP or midwife about the best course of action for you. There is an antibiotic that is thought to help prevent the baby from becoming infected. An amniocentesis or cordocentesis test can be used to check if the baby is also infected and scans may show if the baby has been damaged.

