

Cat 101

Should I Worry About Toxoplasmosis from Cats?

Expectant parents or those with young children may worry about keeping a cat due to reports that cats may transmit the disease toxoplasmosis. Thousands of cats have been turned into shelters due to misunderstandings about this disease.



Toxoplasmosis is a disease caused by the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* and presents little danger to healthy adults. The truth is that many people have already been exposed to *Toxoplasma gondii* and are carrying antibodies for it.

- Handling or eating raw or poorly cooked meat is the most common way to contract the disease.
- Toxoplasmosis can be transmitted by a cat if a human ingests the parasite from contaminated feces.
- Cats become infected with *Toxoplasma gondii* by eating infected birds, rodents, and other small animals. Once infected, they shed the parasite in their feces.

If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, ask your physician for a toxoplasma screen. If the test shows you already have antibodies against toxoplasma, then you are highly unlikely to become infected. New infection of a mother during or just before pregnancy can cause serious and lasting harm to her fetus.

If you have never been exposed to toxoplasma and you are pregnant, simple precautions can avoid any problems:

- Keep your cat indoors only. By doing so, you can be certain he or she won't come into contact with and ingest an infected animal.
- Have someone else clean the litter box while you are trying to become pregnant and throughout pregnancy. If you must clean the litter box, wear gloves and wash your hands well afterward.
- Keep young children from coming into contact with feces in the litter box and outside.
- Be sure the litter box gets cleaned daily. The toxoplasma parasite only becomes infectious 1-5 days after it is shed in the feces.
- Wear gloves while gardening.
- If you eat meat, cook it thoroughly. Wash your hands after touching uncooked meat.

For more information from the CDC about toxoplasmosis, [CLICK HERE](#).