

## **What is toxoplasmosis?**

- An infection caused by the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*.
- The parasite is found most often in cats, but can be found in pigs, sheep, chicken, cattle, deer and birds.

## **How does a person get toxoplasmosis?**

- It can be spread by touching your hands to your mouth after gardening, cleaning a cat's litter box or touching anything that has come into contact with cat feces.
- Infection with toxoplasmosis can occur by eating raw or partly cooked infected meat, or by touching your hands to your mouth after handling the meat.
- An infected pregnant woman can pass the infection to her unborn child.

## **What are the signs and symptoms?**

- Most infected people have no symptoms.
- If symptoms occur, they appear 5 to 23 days following contact with the parasite.
- Symptoms may include swollen lymph glands, or muscle aches and pains lasting a few days to several weeks.
- People with weakened immune systems may develop severe toxoplasmosis resulting in damage to the eyes or the brain.

Infants infected before birth can be born with, or have delayed, serious mental or physical problems.

## **How is toxoplasmosis treated?**

- In a healthy person, treatment is not needed.
- For infected pregnant women or people who have weakened immune systems, antibiotics may be used for treatment.

## **How is toxoplasmosis prevented?**

- Wear gloves when gardening or handling soil.
- Wash hands well with warm, soapy water after outdoor activities such as gardening.
- People with weakened immune systems or who are pregnant should:
  - keep cats indoors and feed them dry or canned cat food
  - avoid handling stray cats and kittens
  - avoid changing the cat's litter box. If this is not possible, wear gloves, change the box daily, and wash hands well.
- Cook all meat thoroughly.

## **Quick Facts**

- Carried by cats
- Usually no symptoms
- Can be severe in pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems
- Good handwashing reduces spread

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For more information contact your doctor, the Provincial Health Line at **811**, or Population and Public Health at **306-655-4612**

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