



Pregnancy Pearls

TOXOPLASMOSIS – Does the cat really have to go?

Pregnant cat lovers don't despair. Your beloved feline friend is not a reason to be worried for your baby.

What is Toxoplasmosis?

Toxoplasmosis is caused when we are infected by a parasite called *Toxoplasma gondii*. This little organism has a rather unfortunate life cycle that involves being "shed" in cat poo. If it is then ingested, it makes its way into muscle or other tissue where it then lies dormant.

How can Toxoplasma be acquired?

The most common source for acquiring toxoplasma is in raw, processed or undercooked meat. If a pregnant woman acquires toxoplasma for the first time in pregnancy, then it can also be passed on to her unborn baby. If a woman has been exposed to toxoplasmosis prior to falling pregnant, the risk to her and her baby is very small.

The risk of acquiring directly from your domestic cat is very small, unless you are in direct contact with cat poo and don't wash your hands!

What are the effects on mothers and unborn babies?

Mothers' infections tend to be asymptomatic. The effects on babies can vary in severity. To confirm the infection, tertiary ultrasound and amniocentesis may be required.

How do you avoid Toxoplasmosis?

- Hand washing is the single most important means of avoiding toxoplasmosis.
- Getting someone else to change the kitty litter also is a good idea (or at least wearing gloves when you do).
- Also avoid drinking unfiltered water or eating raw or undercooked meat
- Also make sure surfaces where food is prepared are thoroughly washed and cleaned off
- Cook meat to at least 66 degrees Celsius and if it is going to be frozen, freeze for at least 24 hours to less than 12 degrees Celsius.

The above information doesn't take the place of a medical consultation so please seek further advice if you have further concerns.

Contact us to book an appointment

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