

Toxoplasmosis



Toxoplasmosis is an illness caused by the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. People can become infected after ingesting the parasite or by having direct or indirect contact with cat poop. Anyone can get toxoplasmosis. Most people who are infected will not experience any symptoms. However, some people may develop flu-like illness or long-term effects, like vision problems. Toxoplasmosis can cause serious health problems for people who are pregnant or have a weakened immune system.



How is it spread?

- ▶ Someone can become sick through eating raw or undercooked pork, lamb, goat, or wild game meat, or by drinking unpasteurized goat and sheep milk products.
- ▶ Cats can shed the parasite in their poop. Someone can become infected when they have contact with cat poop, such as:
 - ▶ Cleaning cat litter boxes.
 - ▶ Playing in a sandbox or yard where cats have pooped.
 - ▶ Doing yardwork or gardening where cats have pooped.
- ▶ Rarely, cat poop with the parasite can also contaminate unwashed fruits and vegetables, or water in lakes, streams or ponds.
- ▶ *Toxoplasma* can be passed from the mother to her fetus.



What are the signs and symptoms?

Most people will not develop any symptoms. Some people may have flu-like illness. People who are pregnant or have a weakened immune system may experience more severe symptoms.

Common Symptoms

- ▶ Muscle aches
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Fever with chills and sweats
- ▶ Swollen lymph nodes
- ▶ Tiredness

Symptoms in Severe Cases

- ▶ Inflammation of the eye and blurred vision with possible blindness
- ▶ Miscarriage or birth defects
- ▶ Inflammation of the brain



What are the treatment options?

- ▶ Symptoms will usually go away within a few days without needing treatment.
- ▶ Medications are available for people who are at risk of experiencing severe disease.



How can it be prevented?

- ▶ Wash hands with soap after coming into contact with cat poop, like after scooping litter.
- ▶ Wash hands with soap after playing and working in sand, dirt, or handling raw meat.
- ▶ Cook all meat to an internal temperature of at least 160°F. Use a meat thermometer to check the temperature.
- ▶ It is **not** necessary to rehome your cat if you become pregnant or have a weakened immune system.
- ▶ Talk to a veterinarian or doctor about extra precautions.

