

Toxoplasmosis

PREGNANCY

P A T I E N T I N F O R M A T I O N

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Disease pattern

Toxoplasmosis (zoonosis) is transmitted by eating raw or insufficiently cooked/fried meat or by contact with cats or cat faeces, e.g., during gardening activities. The infectious agent is the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* (*T. gondii*) which is usually harmless to humans. However, in pregnant women *T. gondii* infection should be prevented.

The cat is the so-called final host in whose intestine *T. gondii* propagates.

This parasite can continue to migrate to humans via the excretions of the animals (smear infection).

In immune competent hosts, the infection is harmless and often goes unnoticed. If the immune system is impaired, however, many organs can be damaged by the infection. By all means, an infection should be prevented during pregnancy, as the parasite may be transmitted to the unborn child and lead to inflammation and, in rare cases, to brain damage of the foetus.

T. gondii parasites are globally spread and are frequently found in Switzerland. Active prevention is pivotal to prohibit congenital toxoplasmosis.

CONTACT



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Screening, diagnosis, and treatment

Antibody tests of blood sample may indicate toxoplasmosis immunity status.

In case of clinical suspicion of toxoplasmosis, the test costs are covered by the health insurance. However, they are not part of routine screening during pregnancy.

If anti-*T. gondii* antibodies are detected, ultrasound examination and amniocentesis may subsequently be performed to assess whether the infection has affected the unborn child.

Based on the results, the health professional recommends further investigations needed.

In the absence of clinical suspicion for toxoplasmosis, the laboratory examination is not covered by health insurance and needs to be paid for by the patient.

Costs: IgG CHF 15.70, IgM CHF 22.50
(+ CHF 21.60 administrative costs)

Precautions and Recommendations

The risk of *T. gondii* infection can be reduced by precautionary measures:

Refrain from consuming raw or insufficiently cooked or fried meat.

Omit contact or processing of raw meat, otherwise observe high cooking and hand hygiene standards.

Fresh vegetables must be thoroughly washed prior to consumption.

If you have contact with cats or if you hold pet cats excellent hand hygiene needs to be observed. Cat litter trays should not be placed within living areas and must only be cleaned while wearing latex gloves.

When working in farming, in a flower shop, in a small pet shop, or in a restaurant, thorough hand hygiene needs to be ensured.

Conclusion

T. gondii infection must be avoided during pregnancy, as the infection may be transmitted to the unborn child. In rare cases, a congenital toxoplasmosis may cause inflammation or serious organ failure in the foetus. The risk of infection is low by practising excellent hand and food hygiene and refraining from the consumption of raw meat. Toxoplasmosis immune status is determined by laboratory tests.

