

If you are concerned that you may have toxoplasmosis, discuss this with your midwife or doctor.

Blood tests can be carried out to check whether you do have the infection. Sometimes two samples may need to be taken at least two weeks apart. If the result shows there is an infection in pregnancy, we recommend referral to Counties Manukau Fetal Medicine Unit for further assessment and management of your pregnancy.

### Available Test and Treatment

Treating infected pregnant women with Antibiotics (spiramycin and sulphonamide) may be prescribed to try to reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission, and to reduce the severity of infection in the baby; however these drugs have potential adverse toxic effects.



# Toxoplasmosis

## Food related illness

Information for Pregnant Women and Whanau



[www.countiesmanukauhealth.org.nz](http://www.countiesmanukauhealth.org.nz)

### Reference

Cochrane Database—Treatment for Toxoplasmosis in Pregnancy 1999

Up to Date—Toxoplasmosis in Pregnancy 2018

	<b>Department:</b> Women's Health <b>Approved by:</b> Director of Midwifery <b>Owner:</b> Midwife Educator	<b>Updated:</b> Oct 2018 <b>Review:</b> Oct 2021
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## What is it?

Toxoplasmosis is a rare infection which is particularly important during pregnancy because if the mother is affected her unborn baby may be harmed.

Toxoplasmosis is a bacterial infection found in cat and dog waste and in other animals, as well as raw and under-cooked meat and in unpasteurized milk products.

Swallowing anything infected by this bacterium can cause toxoplasmosis.

Fortunately there are many things you can do to avoid the risk.



***The single most effective thing you can do is wash your hands well after handling all meat, vegetables and after gardening.***

## How do you get Toxoplasmosis?

- Handling cat litter or by gardening (where there may be traces of cat and dog waste).
- Drinking unclean water or unpasteurised milk.
- Eating raw or uncooked meat, poultry or eggs.
- Eating shellfish.

## What can you do to protect yourself?

- Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling raw meat (or wear gloves).



- Eat only well cooked meat, poultry and eggs.

Don't eat ready-made or stored salads.

However, you can make salads if well washed and eaten straight away.

- Avoid cold smoked or cured meats such as ham or salami (They can be eaten if served hot e.g. in hot pizza).
- Keep kitchen work surfaces and utensils clean.
- Pregnant women should wear gloves while gardening and wash hands carefully afterwards.
- Avoid getting a kitten, or having close contact with kittens if you are pregnant.
- If you have a cat, if possible have someone else empty the litter box/pick up after it has had a bowel motion.



- Cover children's sandpits to keep animals out.
- If travelling to other countries drink only filtered water.
- Avoid eating shellfish when pregnant. However, you can eat cooked fish.
- Avoid raw or unpasteurised milk particularly from goats. Wash fruit and vegetables, especially if they come from a home garden.

## Symptoms and Complications of Toxoplasmosis

The number of women who contract toxoplasmosis during pregnancy fortunately is small and not all of them transmit it to their babies.

- Adults often show no symptoms or
- Tiredness, swollen glands, fever, headache and muscle weakness, that feel like flu symptoms and can last for a month or longer

***Contact your GP if you have any symptoms'.***

Women who are infected with toxoplasmosis for the first time during pregnancy have increased risk of a miscarriage or stillbirth although this remains very rare.

In some cases baby is at risk of serious complications of having visual problems and brain damage as the infection can cross through the placenta over to baby.