

## What diagnostic tests are available?

Ideally, a blood test should be done as early as possible when planning a pregnancy, i.e. before the start of a pregnancy. The blood tests for antibodies against *Toxoplasma gondii* are:

- If “IgG” antibodies are detectable, you have immune protection.  
No further action is required, and you and your child are protected.
- If no IgG antibodies can be detected, this means that you are still susceptible to infection with *Toxoplasma gondii*. You should follow the preventive measures. In addition, blood tests are recommended every 8 weeks to detect a possible infection in time.
- If you have IgG and IgM antibodies for the first time during pregnancy, further tests will be needed to determine whether these antibodies are a result of a previous infection (i.e. protection for you and the baby) or if you might have a fresh infection.

## Is there a treatment?

There are a number of drug treatments available which vary in terms of their duration and the type of medication. Which medication you are given depends on when you were infected.

Drug therapy is also available to treat the newborn for the infection.

### For statutory health insurance holders:

Some medical services cannot be covered by health insurance companies or cannot be covered in every case (e.g. at the patient's own request) and must therefore be paid by the patient.

Please refer to the order form for individual healthcare services for the current prices.

Please note that further diagnostics are required if IgM antibodies are detected. The scope of these services is determined by the attending physician. The costs may then vary.

### For private health insurance holders:

Private health insurance will cover the costs according to the valid GOÄ if there has been no previous exclusion of benefits. If you have any questions about this, your doctor will be happy to advise you.



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## Toxoplasma gondii (Toxoplasmosis)

Infection in pregnancy



## What is Toxoplasmosis?

Toxoplasmosis is an infectious disease caused by the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. *Toxoplasma gondii* is widespread worldwide. The parasites live exclusively in the cells (intracellular) and passes through various stages in different intermediate hosts and the final host. Its primary host, or in other words, its final host are cats. The parasite reproduces in specific cells in the cat's intestines. Farmed animals, such as pigs and poultry, but also mussels and other shellfish serve as intermediate hosts for the parasite. Humans are also among the intermediate hosts of *Toxoplasma gondii*.

## How does infection spread?

Infection usually occurs by ingesting the microscopic *Toxoplasma* cysts:

1. Eating raw or under-heated meat or meat products containing the cysts.
2. Contact with cats or their poop (Warning! Watch out for soil when gardening! It can also contain the pathogen!).

Infection via blood/blood products is also possible in rare cases.

## What are the symp-

## toms?

In otherwise healthy people, an infection with *Toxoplasma gondii* goes unnoticed in most cases (80-90%). However, uncharacteristic, flu-like symptoms such as fever and lymph node swelling in the head and neck may also appear about 2-3 weeks after infection. Of course, an infection can only be detected by a blood test (detection of antibodies). The infection usually resolves on its own.

## Infection in pregnancy

More than 50% of women of childbearing age are not immune to *Toxoplasma gondii*. If the mother's initial infection occurs during pregnancy, there is a risk of foetal infection. As the pregnancy progresses, the likelihood of transmission to the unborn increases, and the severity of the disease in the child decreases. The unborn child may be harmed, depending on the stage of pregnancy (brain damage, eye changes, stillbirth).

It is therefore essential that preventative measures be taken against a first infection in pregnancy if the mother is not already immune.

## How can I protect myself and my unborn child?

Preventive measures include:

- Do not eat raw cured meats and meat products such as salami, chorizo and prosciutto
- Wash raw vegetables and fruits thoroughly before eating, peel or cook if necessary
- Do not touch your mouth or eyes when handling raw meat
- Roast or heat meat well (core temperature at least 50 °C for 20 minutes); alternatively freeze at -21°C before preparation
- Wash your hands after contact with raw meat, gardening or other work where you are in contact with soil and after visiting sandy playgrounds
- Do not feed raw meat to cats
- Clean the cat litter tray with hot water every day (the pregnant woman should not do this)

(Attention! Transmission is also possible through the cat's fur!)

There is currently no protective vaccine. Therefore, to ensure preventive measures are upheld, it is useful to know whether or not the mother has immunity from a past infection. This is ascertained by determining the antibody status.

