

mately every 8 weeks to check for any unnoticed infection. Any suspected symptoms which could indicate a new infection should also be tested.

How can a toxoplasma infection be avoided?

- Do not eat any raw sausage or meat products such as minced beef, salami, raw ham, etc.
- When handling raw meat, do not touch the mouth (or the eyes)
- Cook or heat through meat thoroughly; deep freezing at -20 °C or heating to above 65 °C kills off the parasites
- Wash hands after contact with raw meat, with soil or dirty vegetables
- Wash, peel or cook fruit and vegetables well before eating
- Avoid field or garden work
- Do not feed raw meat to cats
- Do not allow cat out of the house
- Avoid contact with objects which may have been soiled with cat faeces
- Daily cleaning of cat litter tray by another person

Further information on toxoplasmosis in cats can be obtained from the flyer „toxoplasmosis in cats“, available from the Institut für Veterinärmedizinische Diagnostik (Institute for veterinary medical diagnostics).

Handed out by:

Practice stamp

Please note that information regarding reimbursement is only valid for patients who are either members of German statutory or private health insurance.

For those with statutory insurance:

Some medical services cannot, or not in each case, (e.g. on own request) be borne by the health insurance company and must therefore be paid by the patient themselves.

Please find the current prices on the order form for individual health services.

We must point out that evidence of IgM antibodies will require further diagnostics. The scope of these services will be determined by the attending doctor.

For those with private insurance:

The costs will be borne by the private health insurance company according to a valid GOÄ [German medical fee schedule] if no prior exclusion of services exists. If you have questions about this, your doctor will be happy to advise you.

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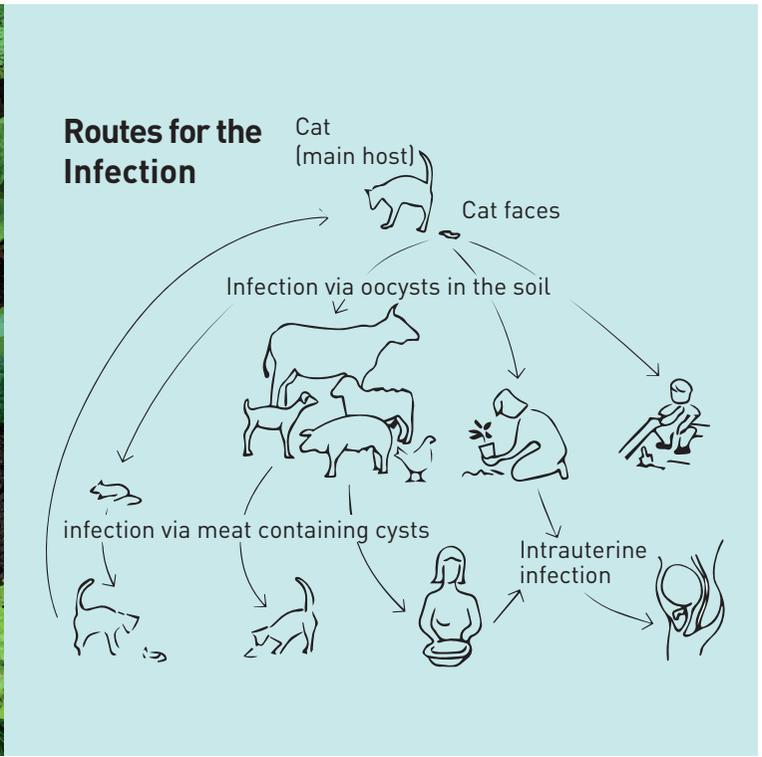


Toxoplasmosis during pregnancy



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How can an active toxoplasma infection be detected?

The infection often passes completely unnoticed or with minimal symptoms, e.g. flu-like symptoms or swelling of the lymph nodes. The infection can only be detected for certain by means of a blood test (evidence of antibodies).

When should the blood test be carried out?

In the case of a planned pregnancy, the test should where possible be carried out before pregnancy and in the case of an existing pregnancy then as early as possible.

What conclusions can be drawn from the tests?

1. If the woman already has toxoplasma gondii antibodies prior to pregnancy, then she and her child are protected (immunity).
2. If the pregnant woman is checked for the first time at the start of her pregnancy and antibodies are detected it is necessary to clarify via a special test procedure whether these antibodies are the result of a historical infection (i.e. there is protection for the pregnant woman and her child) or a new infection. A new infection needs to be treated (with antibiotics).
3. If the test shows no antibodies, then the woman is unprotected against toxoplasma.
4. It is then important that the pregnant woman follows all the rules for avoiding a toxoplasma infection. During the later course of pregnancy, monitoring tests should be carried out approxi-

What is „toxoplasmosis“?

Toxoplasmosis is an infectious disease caused by the toxoplasma gondii parasite. The main host of the parasite is the cat; birds and other mammals can be alternate hosts. Many people have experienced a toxoplasma infection during their lives (in most cases unnoticed) and have thus gained stable, life-long immunity. Specific antibodies can be detected in their blood.

If a woman is infected with toxoplasma gondii during pregnancy, it is possible for the parasite to be passed to the unborn child.

Depending on the stage of pregnancy, it can cause damage to the child (seizures, changes to eyes, stillbirth).

How can a pregnant woman become infected with toxoplasma gondii?

The infection most commonly occurs by ingesting the microscopically small toxoplasma cysts via the mouth.

Main routes of infection::

1. Ingestion of toxoplasma cysts which are released with the faeces of infected cats and in the cats' fur and which remain infectious in the environment for weeks.
2. Eating or touching raw or insufficiently heated meat which contains toxoplasma cysts.