



## Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis (toxoplasma) is caused by a parasite. The parasite is common. A healthy immune system keeps it under control. It can infect any organ when a person has a weak immune system.

Toxoplasmosis most often causes problems in the brain that can sometimes lead to coma or death.

### Symptoms

- Fever
- Easy to get confused
- Headache
- Weakness or paralysis
- Tremors
- Seizures or shakes
- Memory problems

### Causes

The parasites live in cat feces, raw vegetables, infected water, and raw meat. It is mostly in pork, lamb or deer.

If you eat raw or poorly cooked meat, you can get infected. You could also get it if you touch your mouth after you change cat litter.

Pregnant women who have it may pass it to their newborn child.

### How to Know You Have Toxo

A doctor can do a blood test to check if you have been exposed to toxoplasma. Your doctor will also need to order a brain scan like an MRI or CAT scan to confirm toxoplasmosis.

### Treatment

Two common medications (meds) to treat toxoplasmosis are: Daraprim® (pyrimethamine) and sulfadiazine. The brain can absorb either one from the blood stream.

Most people get better two to three weeks after they start treatment.

Side effects from these meds are: anemia, decrease in white blood cells, kidney problems, fever and a skin rash.

Toxoplasmosis often comes back. People who get it should stay on the meds at a lower dose.

Talk to your doctor before you change your type or dose of treatment.

### Prevention

- Take your HIV meds. The treatment makes your immune system stronger. This helps control the parasites.
- Take meds to prevent an infection if your CD4 cell count is below 100
- Wash your hands well with soap and warm water before you eat or handle food.
- Cook meat or fish all the way through before you eat it.
- Wear gloves and cover your nose and mouth when you clean a cat's litter box. Throw the gloves away and wash your hands after you are done.

#### **For more information**

Contact your Registered Nurse Care Manager, or call PHP Nurse Advice Line at: (800) 797-1717.

