



*maiden to  
mother*

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# *A Basic Understanding T. gondii*

AND SELF CARE FOR AVOIDING  
IT DURING PREGNANCY



## WHERE IN THE WORLD IS IT MORE PREVALENT AND WHY?

- Tropical areas of Latin America or sub-Saharan Africa where cats are abundant and the climate favors survival of oocysts
- France where undercooked meat is commonly eaten
- Panama, Nigeria and Somalia where there is often soil exposure to oocysts
- Nunavik and northern Quebec due to consumption of potentially contaminated water from water reservoirs, and consumption of seal meat and feathered game.

Women who have traveled to countries where there is higher seroprevalence would benefit from testing during the prenatal period.



• Me 23 weeks pregnant with twins

# HOW CAN TRANSMISSION BE PREVENTED?

- Freeze meat for several days at sub-zero (0° F) temperatures before cooking to greatly reduce chance of infection.
- Peel or wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating.
- Do not eat raw or undercooked oysters, mussels, or clams (these may be contaminated with Toxoplasma that has washed into sea water).
- Do not eat undercooked meat (especially pork, lamb, and venison)
- Do not drink unpasteurized goat's milk.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, counters, utensils, and hands with hot soapy water after contact with raw meat, poultry, seafood, or unwashed fruits or vegetables.
- Wear gloves when gardening and during any contact with soil or sand because it might be contaminated with cat feces that contain Toxoplasma. Wash hands with soap and water after gardening or contact with soil or sand.
- Teach children the importance of washing hands to prevent infection
- Have someone else change the litter box whenever possible or wear disposable gloves if you must change it yourself.
- Keep cats indoors.
- Do not adopt or handle stray cats, especially kittens. Do not get a new cat while you are pregnant.





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## SYMPTOMS + RISKS

### Who is at risk:

- Infants born to mothers who are newly infected with *Toxoplasma gondii* during or just before pregnancy
- Persons with severely weakened immune systems

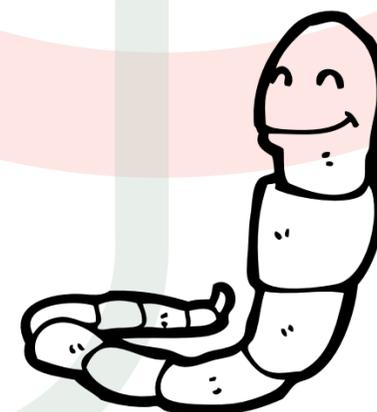
While infection in early pregnancy poses a small risk of fetal transmission (< 6%), rates of transmission range between 60% and 81% in the third trimester.

Transmission during embryogenesis is rare, but results in far more serious effects on the fetus.

### Flu-like symptoms such as:

- fever
- swollen lymph glands
- sore throat
- a headache
- muscle aches and pains

*Toxoplasmosis gondii* can cause damage to the brain, eyes, or other organs and can be reactivated later in life. This means infants exposed in the third trimester may seem healthy and symptoms may be blamed on something else.





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## TREATMENT

Most healthy people recover from toxoplasmosis without treatment. Pregnant women, newborns, and infants can be treated, although the parasite is not eliminated completely. The parasites can remain within tissue cells in a less active phase; their location makes it difficult for the medication to completely eliminate them.

