

# Food Borne Illnesses

## Toxoplasmosis and Listeria



### Toxoplasmosis - What is it?

A single-celled parasite called *Toxoplasma gondii* causes a disease known as toxoplasmosis. Of those who are infected, very few have symptoms because a healthy person's immune system usually keeps the parasite from causing illness. However, pregnant people and individuals who have compromised immune systems should be cautious; for them, a *Toxoplasma* infection could cause serious health problems.

### How are pregnant people exposed

- cleaning a cat's litter box when the cat has shed *Toxoplasma* in its feces
- touching or ingesting anything that has come into contact with cat feces that contain *Toxoplasma*
- accidentally ingesting contaminated soil (e.g., not washing hands after gardening or eating unwashed fruits or vegetables from a garden)
- Parent-to-child (congenital) transmission during pregnancy.



### How to protect yourself?

- Wash hands often
- Have your partner clean the catbox for you. Or wear disposable gloves if you clean it yourself
- Keep your cats indoors. Don't handle stray cats
- Wear gloves while gardening and wash produce well.
- Cook and store meat properly. Avoid consuming raw or unpasteurized dairy



### Risks

Toxoplasmosis cannot be caught by petting a cat or having a cat as a pet. The infection comes from coming into contact with the infected faeces of a cat.

Toxoplasmosis is only a risk to an unborn baby if caught for the first time during pregnancy or within a few weeks before you get pregnant. The risk to the fetus in development, especially a fetus whose gestating parent is \*newly\* infected with the parasite, is the increased risk for mental retardation, pneumonia, eye infections, jaundice, and hydrocephalus



### Signs and Symptoms

Some people may have mild flu-like symptoms. A few may experience a more long-term illness similar to glandular fever and swollen lymph nodes. About 10% show no symptoms. Most babies born with toxoplasmosis have no obvious damage at birth but develop symptoms during childhood or even adulthood.

### Tests and Treatments

Blood tests may detect infection. Treatment might include antibiotics and tylenol for symptom management. Babies may be treated after birth and monitored closely

### Links to check out!

The BUMP:

<https://www.thebump.com/a/toxoplasmosis-during-pregnancy>

CDC information and guidelines-

[https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxoplasmosis/gen\\_info/pregnant.html](https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxoplasmosis/gen_info/pregnant.html)

Up To Date-

<https://www.uptodate.com/contents/toxoplasmosis-and-pregnancy>

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## Toxoplasmosis and Listeriosis



### Listeriosis (Listeria) - What is it?

Listeriosis is an infection caused by the *Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria. Most often caused by eating foods contaminated by the bacteria. Those that have consumed contaminated food can become extremely ill and the bacteria can infect different parts of the body, including the brain, spinal cord, or bloodstream.

### How to protect yourself?

- Avoid eating hot dogs, lunch meats, cold cuts, and other deli meats unless they are heated to an internal temperature of 165°F or until steaming hot.
- Avoid eating soft cheeses such as feta, Brie, Camembert, blue-veined cheeses, and Mexican-style cheeses such as queso blanco, queso fresco, and Panela, unless they are made with pasteurized milk. (Tip: most cheese commercially made in the U.S. is pasteurized. Imported and small-batch cheeses are less likely to be pasteurized.)
- Avoid eating refrigerated pâté, meat spreads from a deli counter, and refrigerated smoked seafood unless it is an ingredient in a cooked dish such as a casserole.
- Wash hands, knives, countertops, and cutting boards after handling and preparing uncooked foods.
- Consume perishable items such as meat, poultry, and fish within 2 days of purchase.
- Cook meat, poultry, and fish to the recommended internal temperature.
- Do not eat unpasteurized (raw) milk or dairy products.
- Eat cut melon right away or refrigerate at 41°F or colder for no more than 7 days. Throw away cut melons left at room temperature for more than 4 hours.
- Do not eat raw or lightly cooked sprouts of any kind (including alfalfa, clover, radish, and mung bean sprouts). Cook sprouts thoroughly to reduce your risk for getting sick.
- Watch for active food recalls and avoid affected products.



### Risks

Babies born with Listeriosis are at risk of serious infections in the blood or the brain and can cause lifelong complications including:

- intellectual disability
- paralysis
- seizures
- blindness
- problems with the brain, kidneys or heart

Listeriosis infection in pregnancy can also cause miscarriage, stillbirth, preterm delivery or a life threatening infection for the newborn.



### Signs and Symptoms

Pregnant people typically experience only fever and other flu-like symptoms, such as fatigue and muscle aches but can also experience diarrhea, upset stomach, stiff neck, headache, confusion or loss of balance. Symptoms can occur as late as 2 months after exposure.

### Tests and Treatments

Specific laboratory tests are the only way to diagnose this disease. A blood, spinal fluid, or amniotic fluid/placenta test that looks for the bacteria will be able to show if the disease is present. Rest, tylenol, and hydration may be recommended for symptom management.

### Links to check out!

FDA: Listeria - Food safety of Moms to be:

<https://www.fda.gov/food/health-educators/listeria-food-safety-moms-be>

Mayo Clinic: Listeria Infection:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/listeria-infection/symptoms-causes/syc-20355269>

American Pregnancy Association:

<https://americanpregnancy.org/healthy-pregnancy/pregnancy-concerns/listeria-during-pregnancy/>



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## Toxoplasmosis and Listeriosis

### References

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Group Project for MDWF 3010: Complications of the Prenatal Period

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