

# EACH WOMAN SHOULD KNOW IF HER UNBORN CHILD IS PROTECTED AGAINST *TOXOPLASMA*. NONIMMUNE MOTHERS SHOULD FOLLOW THESE PRECAUTIONS:

## Eat meat only when it is cooked to “well done.”

For example, do not eat meat tartare or “rare” meat.



## Avoid contact with materials potentially contaminated with cat excrement.

Have someone else dispose of the contents of your cat’s litterbox and have them clean the litterbox immediately with boiling water. Do not feed your cat raw meat. Wear gloves while gardening.



## Wash your hands

after handling bloody (raw) meat and before eating. Keep your hands away from your eyes while preparing uncooked meat.



## Wash food,

such as green salads and fruits, especially if it is to be eaten uncooked.



## Follow your blood antibody test

for *Toxoplasma* in conjunction with your doctor. If acute infection occurs, detection and treatment can protect your baby.



### What *Toxoplasma gondii* is and how it can affect your unborn baby.

*Toxoplasma gondii* is a small (only visible with a microscope), common parasite. If a woman becomes infected with *Toxoplasma* for the first time while she is pregnant her unborn baby may also be infected. Infection of a baby while in utero may result in damage to the baby’s brain, eyes, ears, or in the baby’s death. Infection is acquired mainly by eating foods or handling materials such as sand in a sandbox or garden soil contaminated with cat feces or from eating undercooked meats that contain *Toxoplasma*. If you are acutely infected with *Toxoplasma* while you are pregnant, although you may

have symptoms or signs such as a flu-like illness or enlarged lymph nodes, chances are your infection will be so mild that you may never realize you have been infected. While you feel fine, your unborn child is at risk of acquiring the disease from you and the results can be tragic. Nearly 9 out of 10 pregnant women in the United States are at risk of being infected with *Toxoplasma* during pregnancy. The other 10% are immune due to infection acquired before the pregnancy. To know whether you are immune your doctor must have your blood tested for antibody to *Toxoplasma*. Follow the precautions above to protect your unborn baby and avoid being acutely infected with *Toxoplasma* while you are pregnant.

## In conclusion:

- **Wash your hands before eating meals.**
- **Eat meat only if it has been cooked to “well done.”**
- **Avoid contact with materials contaminated with cat excrement.**

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This pamphlet was prepared especially for Dana, Chad, Dani Jo, Elena, Graham, Grant, Joshua, Lucky, Margaret, Miguel, Nicky, Robbie, Roxanne, and many others and their families who understand with special poignancy Edward Young's statement *“who would not give a trifle to prevent what they would give a thousand worlds to cure.”*

Adapted from material originally prepared by Bien Naitre en Lorraine.

Front photograph was donated by Elizabeth Hathon.

Photograph of kittens was donated by Bruce Coleman Limited.

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**HAVE YOU DONE  
EVERYTHING TO  
PROTECT YOUR  
UNBORN CHILD?**

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