

TOXOPLASMOSIS – DANGEROUS DISEASE OF PREGNANT WOMEN AND PERSONS WITH IMMUNOSUPPRESSION

Summary

The infection with intracellular protozoan *Toxoplasma gondii* is one of the most frequent parasitic diseases in humans. The parasite is widespread in the entire world, except some cold regions of Arctica and Antarctica. Hot and dry tropical countries have a lower incidence of toxoplasmosis than temperate, moist climate areas. Man can acquire toxoplasmosis by ingestion or testing of undercooked or raw meat containing tissue cysts of the parasite, by eating unwashed fruit or vegetables, and other products contaminated with sporulated oocysts from cat faeces or rather by direct contact with *Toxoplasma* infected domestic or wild kittens. Toxoplasmosis is an example of benign, usually asymptomatic disease, which leads to a stable, protective immunity of the infected individual for all his life. In cases with a deep damage of the immunological system, it may present a severe clinical picture and poor patients' prognosis,

especially in persons with cancers, treated with immunosuppressive therapy, transplants recipients, and those infected with HIV. The primary *T. gondii* infection during pregnancy or in the periconceptional period may result in an important risk of transplacental infection and a congenital disease in the foetus and newborn infant. Hydrocephaly, intracranial calcifications, blindness and mental retardation are the most common sequelae of congenitally acquired and untreated toxoplasmosis. Implementation of simple hygienic and dietary measures, obligatory serological screening during gestation or postnatal testing of neonates are widely used and efficacious modes of the prevention. Treatment of infected pregnant women, congenitally infected foetuses and infants during the first year of life is successful and reduces the risk of late clinical complications in older children and adolescents.