



► Fostering is an ideal activity for people that love animals but cannot commit to having a lifelong pet in China.



► Most animal rescue groups in Shanghai do not have a shelter, so they depend on the help of rescuers and foster parents.



► It is a rewarding experience to give an abandoned and/or mistreated animal a second chance in life.

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JAR's

Toxoplasmosis and the risk to Pregnant Women

Toxoplasmosis is a parasitic disease caused by the protozoan *Toxoplasma gondii*. It can infect most warm-blooded mammals including humans and the primary host is the cat family. Animals are most commonly infected by eating infected meat- either raw or not properly cooked meat or by scavenging outdoors on an infected rodent or the like (if your cat is an indoors cat and / or eats properly prepared cat food, then the risk of your pet being infected are extremely low).

Toxoplasmosis in humans can be caught via two ways: by ingesting the "eggs" in cat feces either via handling infected litter, soil or unwashed veggies or by eating undercooked meat (particularly lamb).

Although cats are widely believed to be the greatest transmitter of Toxoplasmosis it is in fact significantly more likely to contract the disease by eating poorly cooked meat. During the first few weeks post-exposure to *Toxoplasmosis gondii* the infection typically causes mild flu-like symptoms or no illness at all - thereafter the parasite rarely causes any symptoms in otherwise healthy adults. It is estimated that around a third of the worlds population is carrying Toxoplasmosis without even knowing it. However, this disease can be detrimental to two categories of people- those with a weakened immune system and pregnant women.

Although the chances of getting it from your beloved kitty are very low, there are some sensible precautions that you should be well-advised to take to minimize any risk of being infected:

1. Try to get someone else to clean the litter tray - if this is not possible then always wear gloves.
2. change the litter daily - the feces only becomes infectious (should your cat be carrying the parasite) after 24 hours so daily removal of soiled litter negates the chances of infection.
3. Wash out the tray with boiling water once weekly.
4. Do not feed your cat raw meat or allow it to hunt outdoors.
5. Always thoroughly wash your hands after dealing the litter tray.
6. Always wear gloves when gardening outdoors and dealing with the soil where cats could have used as their toilet.
7. Always thoroughly wash salad leaves and veggies before eating and also after handling raw meat.
8. Always make sure meat that you eat is thoroughly cooked through.

As said, the incidence of Toxoplasmosis during pregnancy is generally very low and apart from these sensible precautions your G.P. can also check to see if you have been infected via a simple blood test. It is generally new infections that are a danger to pregnant women - those that have not been exposed to the parasite before. It is therefore wise to be more vigilant with avoiding the above risk factors if you are new to living with cats.

Chances are that if you have lived around cats for a long time you have been exposed to it before and you are therefore now immune and not at great risk. This does not totally negate the risk of infection so again it is better to be on the safe side and follow the guidelines for peace of mind.



Jaiya's Animal Rescue

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