



# **Neuroparasitology and Tropical Neurology: Chapter 8. Toxoplasmosis (Handbook of Clinical Neurology)**

*Sandra K. Halonen, Louis M. Weiss*

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*Toxoplasma gondii*, an Apicomplexan, is a pathogenic protozoan that can infect the central nervous system. Infection during pregnancy can result in a congenial infection with severe neurological sequelae. In immunocompromised individuals reactivation of latent neurological foci can result in encephalitis. Immunocompetent individuals infected with *T. gondii* are typically asymptomatic and maintain this infection for life. However, recent studies suggest that these asymptomatic infections may have effects on behavior and other physiological processes. *Toxoplasma gondii* infects approximately one-third of the world population, making it one of the most successful parasitic organisms. Cats and other felidae serve as the definite host producing oocysts, an environmentally resistant life cycle stage found in cat feces, which can transmit the infection when ingested orally. A wide variety of warm-blooded animals, including humans, can serve as the intermediate host in which tissue cysts (containing bradyzoites) develop. Transmission also occurs due to ingestion of the tissue cysts. There are three predominant clonal lineages, termed Types I, II and III, and an association with higher pathogenicity with the Type I strains in humans has emerged. This chapter presents a review of the biology of this infection including the life cycle, transmission, epidemiology, parasite strains, and the host immune response. The major clinical outcomes of congenital infection, chorioretinitis and encephalitis, and the possible association of infection of toxoplasmosis with neuropsychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, are reviewed.

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