Inflammatory Eye Disease

Ocular Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis is an infection caused by a germ called toxoplasma gondii. Toxoplasmosis is a common infection and around 50% of Australians have had it at some stage in their life. Usually the infection is very mild and may pass just like a mild attack of the flu. However, very occasionally, it may affect the eye. Usually when it does so, it affects a small portion of the retina or optic nerve. In this picture the infected retina is the white part.

How do you catch toxoplasmosis? Toxoplasmosis can be caught in three ways:

The first way (and the most common way for people who have had ocular toxoplasmosis) is to catch it as an unborn baby prior to birth. This occurs when the mother develops toxoplasmosis when pregnant and passes it on to her infant through the placenta. However, if you yourself have ocular toxoplasmosis it is not possible to give it to other people or to pass it on to your own children.

A second way to catch toxoplasmosis is from eating under cooked or raw meat from animals that are themselves infected with toxoplasmosis.

The third way is to catch toxoplasmosis is by eating soiled vegetables or having contact with infected cats.

How is ocular toxoplasmosis treated?

If the toxoplasmosis is mild there may be no treatment needed at all. More often it is treated with antibiotics. If the toxoplasmosis is severe then it may need treatment with a combination of antibiotics and steroids. The steroid tablets act to reduce the inflammation inside the eye and decrease the damage caused by the body's immune response to the toxoplasmosis infection. Usually the treatment lasts around 6 weeks but it may need to go on for longer if the infection is persisting. Unfortunately the antibiotics do not kill the germ off completely and people who have one attack are prone to recurrences. These recurrent attacks are usually treated in the same way as the first attack.

What is the long-term outlook?
Fortunately, the long-term outlook for patients with ocular toxoplasmosis is good. Even though recurrences occur, it is usually possible with treatment to prevent any long-term deterioration in vision. It is obviously important to treat each attack as quickly as possible and should you feel that your toxoplasmosis has recurred then you should be seen straight away. If you have any questions you should not hesitate to contact your eye doctor urgently.

Consultation for Inflammatory Eye Diseases

Should you require a consultation for Inflammatory Eye Diseases, please call 1800 986 695. At Eye Surgery Associates we are able to offer you appointments at any one of our three sites: **East Melbourne, Malvern and Doncaster.**