



UK NSC recommendation on antenatal screening for toxoplasmosis

Following a review of the evidence, the UK NSC does not recommend a national screening programme for toxoplasmosis.

Toxoplasmosis is an infection caused by a parasite found in uncooked meats, contaminated soil and cat litter. The infection is common and generally harmless. Many people do not have symptoms, while others may have mild flu-like symptoms.

A pregnant mother can pass this infection to her unborn child if she gets it for the first time during pregnancy. Some babies will be unaffected. Others can develop serious complications to their nervous system, heart, eyes and brain.

The exact symptoms in a baby are unclear.

Advocates of screening suggest that it could prevent babies being affected by these serious complications. This would involve identifying those who are not immune to the infection and monitoring them regularly for symptoms.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

- the screening test has a high false positive rate - this means that many women would be wrongly told their baby is at risk
- current treatment with antibiotics does not seem to prevent the infection being passed to the baby - it is uncertain whether treatment reduces the severity of the infection
- the number of people who might get the infection in the UK has not been estimated

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations on screening for different conditions in the light of new research evidence becoming available.

To find out more about the UK NSC's recommendation on antenatal screening for toxoplasmosis, please visit:

<http://legacy.screening.nhs.uk/toxoplasmosis>

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the NHS in the 4 UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes.

Find out more about the UK National Screening Committee at www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-national-screening-committee-uk-nsc. The UK NSC evidence review process is described at www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process and a list of all UK NSC recommendations can be found at legacy.screening.nhs.uk/recommendations

The UK NSC secretariat is hosted by Public Health England (www.gov.uk/phe).