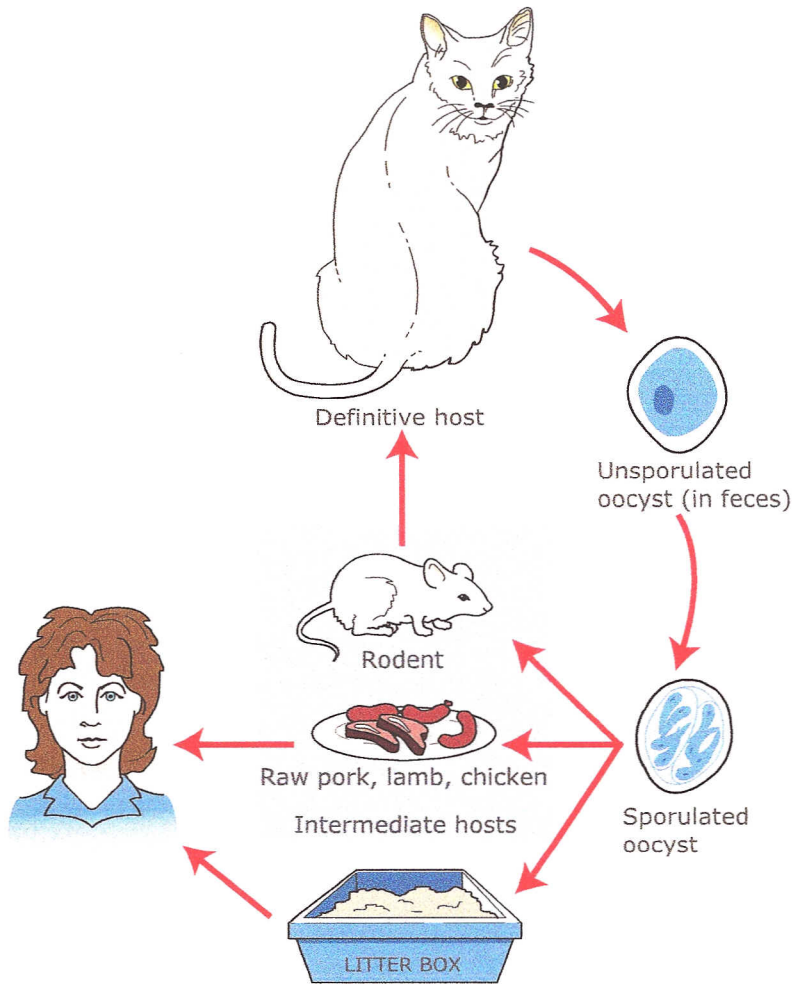


Toxoplasma Gondii Life Cycle - Cat: Life cycle and toxoplasmosis.



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Virtually all warm-blooded animals, including people, can be an intermediate host of the protozoan parasite called *Toxoplasma gondii*, but it can only complete its life cycle and produce oocysts, a type of egg, in the cat. When it is first ingested, the parasite enters the intestinal walls and begins to develop. In an intermediate host, the parasite becomes arrested as a tissue cyst. Cats are usually infected by eating an infected 'intermediate host'. In the cat, tissue cysts in the contaminated meat develop into infective oocysts within 7-10 days after ingestion. After this time, the cat stops shedding oocysts. Infection is uncommon in pet cats that are not hunters, and are fed primarily on commercial cat foods. Oocysts are extremely hardy and can survive for a long time in the environment. Studies with people who routinely work with cats have shown that they have the same risk of developing Toxoplasmosis as the general population. People are thought to contract this illness by consuming improperly cooked contaminated meat.