CHAGAS DISEASE
Neglected Parasitic
Infections in the
United States

Accessible version: https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/resources/npi_chagas.html



Chagas disease is a preventable infection caused by the parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi* and spread by infected insects called triatomine bugs, also known as "kissing bugs." The initial infection usually does not cause severe symptoms and is often not even diagnosed. After years of chronic infection, some people develop heart diseases such as abnormal heart rhythms, heart failure, and an increased risk of sudden death. Chagas disease can also cause gastrointestinal problems, such as severe constipation and difficulty swallowing.

Infection is typically spread by contact with the triatomine bug, most commonly found in rural parts of Mexico, Central America, or South America. However, the disease can also be transmitted from mother to baby (congenital transmission), through organ transplants, or through blood transfusion. Chagas disease is one of several parasitic diseases that results in significant illness among those who are infected and is often poorly understood by healthcare providers.

CHAGAS DISEASE IN THE UNITED STATES



An estimated 300,000 infected people are living in the United States, nearly all of whom were originally infected in endemic areas. These persons often do not know they are infected and are at risk for severe cardiac or gastrointestinal problems from the disease. Diagnosis and treatment can reduce this risk



Donor screening to detect *T. cruzi* infection in the blood supply began in early 2007. As of December 2019, more than 2,460 confirmed positive infections among blood donors were reported to AABB (formerly American Association of Blood Banks) by blood centers. While these efforts have likely reduced the risk of getting Chagas disease from blood products, the large number of positive donors identified indicates that many people with Chagas disease do not know they are infected and could benefit from diagnosis and treatment.



Infected triatomine bugs and wild animals that hurbor *T. cruzi* infection have been found in the United States for decades. There are some reports of vector-borne (spread by contact with the bug) infection originating in the United States.

CDC IS CURRENTLY WORKING TO ADDRESS CHAGAS DISEASE BY



Partnering with state and local health departments to educate and advise health professionals to help them better care for patients with Chagas disease



Supporting healthcare providers and patients in the United States with confirmatory diagnostic testing



Increasing awareness of Chagas disease among healthcare providers, including publishing free, Web-based Continuing Medical Education (CME) and Continuing Nursing Education (CNE) programs



Studying perception, awareness, and understanding of Chagas disease among patients and healthcare providers to help direct outreach efforts and address barriers to care for Chagas disease patients



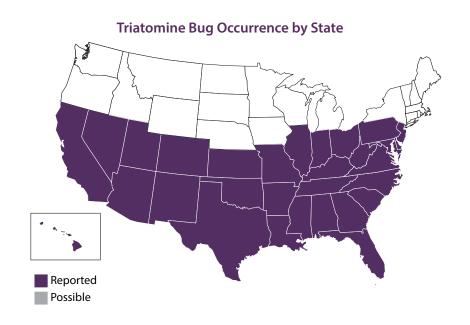
Collaborating with academic institutions and partner organizations to improve diagnostic tests for Chagas disease



Collaborating with partners to determine the risk of Chagas disease among mothers in the United States who may be at increased risk of infection

ADDITIONAL WORK NEEDED INCLUDES

- Improve outreach to healthcare providers so they can better care for patients with Chagas disease
- Determine the risk of transmission of *T. cruzi* in the United States to help prevent new infections from infected bugs and from mothers with Chagas disease to their unborn babies
- Determine the number of people with heart disease that was caused by Chagas disease



FOR MORE INFORMATION

U.S. Department of