Chagas Disease
Fact Sheet

What is Chagas disease?

- A disease that can cause serious heart and stomach illnesses
- A disease spread by contact with an infected triatomine bug also called "kissing bug," "benchuca," "vinchuca," "chinche," or "barbeiro"

Who can get Chagas disease?

Anyone. However, people have a greater chance if they:

- Have lived in rural areas of Mexico, Central America or South America, in countries such as: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay or Venezuela
- Have seen the bug, especially in these areas
- Have stayed in a house with a thatched roof or with walls that have cracks or crevices

How does someone get Chagas disease?

- Usually from contact with a kissing bug
- After the kissing bug bites, it poops. The germs that cause Chagas disease are in the bug's feces. People will usually scratch the bite and when this happens, a small amount of the bug's feces, along with the germs, enter the bloodstream.
- The disease can also be spread from:
  - Mother to baby
  - Blood transfusion
  - Organ transplant
- The disease is not spread through casual person-to-person contact

What are the symptoms?

- A few weeks or months after people first get bitten, they may have mild symptoms like:
  - Fever and body aches
  - Swelling of the eyelid
  - Swelling at the bite mark
- After this first part of the illness, most people have no symptoms and many don't ever get sick
- But some people (less than half) do get sick later, and they may have:
  - Irregular heart beats that can cause sudden death
  - An enlarged heart that doesn't pump blood well
  - Problems with digestion and bowel movements
  - An increased chance of having a stroke

What should I do if I think I might have Chagas disease?

- See a healthcare provider, who will examine you
- Your provider may take a sample of your blood for testing

Why should I get tested for Chagas disease?

- Available treatments may work for you
- Chagas disease can be life threatening even though you may not feel sick now
- To know if your unborn baby will be at risk

Many people who have tested positive are leading healthy lives with the help of their healthcare providers.

Triatomine bug

For more information on Chagas disease, please visit www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas and *click* "General Information" or call 404.718.4745.

For more information in Spanish, please visit www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/es

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