

Chagas Disease

Provider Fact Sheet

What is Chagas disease?

Chagas disease is caused by the parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi* and is spread by infected bugs called triatomines.

Where is Chagas found?

Endemic throughout much of Mexico, Central America, and South America

Who is at risk?

- Persons living in the U.S. who have migrated from endemic areas
- Estimates of 300,000 or more infected Latin Americans living in the U.S.

How is the disease transmitted?

- Triatomines thrive in poorly constructed and usually rural housing, typically living within cracked mud walls and thatched roofs
- During the night, the bugs emerge from their hiding places to feed, defecate, and thus inoculate
- Also transmitted by:
 - Blood transfusion
 - Organ transplantation
 - Congenitally
 - Lab accident (rare)
 - Food or drink (rare)
- Screening for Chagas disease in U.S. blood supply instituted in early 2007

What are the phases of the disease?

Acute

- 4–8 weeks
- Asymptomatic or characterized by mild illness

Chronic

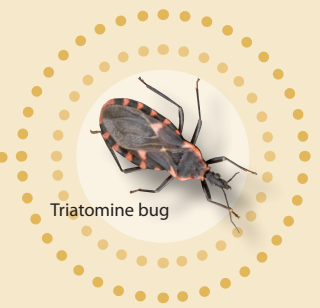
Indeterminate

- Typically asymptomatic for years or decades

Symptomatic

- 20–30% of chronically infected persons develop symptomatic disease
- Cardiac disease beginning with conduction abnormalities may be followed by apical aneurysm and thrombus formation
- Gastrointestinal manifestations
- Increased risk of stroke

Chagas Disease may be life-threatening in both the acute and chronic phases of the infection.



Triatomine bug

Diagnosing Chagas disease

- Detailed patient history including having seen the bug and having stayed within mud walls or thatched roofs, in a country with known Chagas risk
- Hispanic patients may be familiar with other names for the insect such as “kissing bug,” “benchuca,” “vinchuca,” “chinche” or “barbeiro”
- Serum samples may be sent to CDC through your state health department
- Patients should be reassured that contact for testing or treatment will have no effect on immigration status

Treatment of Chagas disease

- Two drugs, nifurtimox and benznidazole, are worldwide standard antiparasitic treatment
- Drugs available from CDC for use under investigational protocols for compassionate treatment
- For more information, please visit the Chagas website at www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas and click “Resources for Health Professionals” or call **404.718.4745** for clinical consults
- Fact sheets and contact information provided on the web