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Chagas Disease

Also called: American trypanosomiasis, South American trypanosomiasis

What is Chagas disease?

Chagas disease, or American trypanosomiasis, is an illness that can cause serious heart and stomach problems. It is caused by a parasite [<https://medlineplus.gov/parasiticdiseases.html>]. Chagas disease is common in Latin America, especially in poor, rural areas. It can also be found in the United States, most often in people who were infected before they moved to the U.S.

What causes Chagas disease?

Chagas disease is caused by the *Trypanosoma cruzi* parasite. It is usually spread by infected blood-sucking bugs called triatomine bugs. They are also known as "kissing bugs" because they often bite people's faces. When one of these bugs bites you, it leaves behind infected waste. You can become infected if you rub the waste in your eyes or nose, the bite wound, or a cut.

Chagas disease can also spread through contaminated food, a blood transfusion, a donated organ, or from the pregnant parent to the baby during pregnancy.

Who is more likely to develop Chagas disease?

Kissing bugs can be found throughout the Americas, but they are more common in certain areas. The people who are most at risk for Chagas disease:

- Live in rural areas of Latin America
- Have seen the bugs, especially in those areas
- Have stayed in a house with a thatched roof or with walls that have cracks or crevices

What are the symptoms of Chagas disease?

In the beginning, there may be no symptoms. Some people do get mild symptoms, such as:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Body aches
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- A rash
- A swollen eyelid

These early symptoms usually go away. However, if you don't treat the infection, it stays in your body. Later, it can cause serious intestinal and heart problems such as:

- An serious arrhythmia [<https://medlineplus.gov/arrhythmia.html>] (a problem with the rate or rhythm of your heartbeat) that can cause sudden death
- An enlarged heart that doesn't pump blood well
- Problems with digestion and bowel movements [<https://medlineplus.gov/bowelmovement.html>]
- An increased chance of having a stroke [<https://medlineplus.gov/stroke.html>]

How is Chagas disease diagnosed?

To find out if you have Chagas disease, your health care provider:

- Will do a physical exam
- Will take your medical history, including asking about your symptoms and where you have lived and traveled
- Will run a blood test for Chagas disease
- May run tests to see whether the disease has affected your intestines and heart

What are the treatments for Chagas disease?

Medicines can kill the parasite, especially early on. You can also treat related problems. For example, a pacemaker [<https://medlineplus.gov/pacemakersandimplantabledefibrillators.html>] can help with some heart complications.

Can Chagas disease be prevented?

There are no vaccines or medicines to prevent Chagas disease. If you travel [<https://medlineplus.gov/travelershealth.html>] to areas where it occurs, you are at higher risk if you sleep outdoors or are staying in poor housing conditions. It is important to use insecticides to prevent bites and practice food safety [<https://medlineplus.gov/foodsafety.html>].

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Learn More

- About Chagas Disease [<https://www.cdc.gov/chagas/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Chagas Disease (American trypanosomiasis) [[https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/chagas-disease-\(american-trypanosomiasis\)](https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/chagas-disease-(american-trypanosomiasis))] (World Health Organization)
Also in Spanish [[https://www.who.int/es/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/chagas-disease-\(american-trypanosomiasis\)](https://www.who.int/es/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/chagas-disease-(american-trypanosomiasis))]
- Clinical Testing and Diagnosis for Chagas Disease [<https://www.cdc.gov/chagas/hcp/diagnosis-testing/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/chagas/es/hcp/diagnosis-testing/pruebas-y-diagnostico-clinicos-para-la-enfermedad-de-chagas.html>]
- Diagnosis of Parasitic Diseases [<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/testing-diagnosis/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Information on Species of Triatomine Bugs in the United States [<https://www.cdc.gov/chagas/hcp/species/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Treatment of Chagas Disease [<https://www.cdc.gov/chagas/treatment/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/chagas/es/treatment/tratamiento-de-la-enfermedad-de-chagas.html>]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Chagas Disease [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Chagas+Disease%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: MaxEnt modeling and risk evaluation of chagas disease vectors in the... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40743131>]
- Article: Association Between Physical Activity, Sedentary Time, and Quality of Life in... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40724202>]

• Article: Chagas disease in Brazil: new challenges and perspectives for old problems.
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40699036>]

- Chagas Disease -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Chagas+Disease%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Patient Handouts

- Chagas disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001372.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001372.htm>]
- Chagas Disease [<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/resources/onepage.pdf>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) - **PDF**
Also in Spanish [https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/resources/es/informativa_breve.pdf]
- Protect Your Baby from Chagas Disease [https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/resources/chagas_protect_your_baby.pdf]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/resources/es/chagas_protect_your_baby_es.pdf]



National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Chagas Disease* is the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>]

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