

# 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](http://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](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/es)

