



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Chagas Disease

What is Chagas?

Chagas disease is a parasitic infection of the blood. The disease is spread by insect vectors found only in the Americas. The disease is mainly found in Latin American countries. There may be as many as 10 million people in Mexico and in Central and South America with Chagas.

What are the symptoms of Chagas?

There are 2 phases of Chagas disease:

- Acute phase:
 - May show no symptoms
 - Swelling where the parasite entered your body (Chagoma)
 - Romana's Sign, which is swelling of the eyelids on the same side of the face as where the bug bite occurred
 - Patient may also have mild flu like illness:
 - Fever
 - Fatigue
 - Body aches
 - Headache
 - Rash
 - Loss of appetite
 - Diarrhea
 - Vomiting
- Chronic Phase
 - One third of people who get Chagas disease will develop severe illness later in life, such as:
 - Heart problems; or
 - Intestinal problems.

How is Chagas spread?

Most people who have Chagas caught it from the bite of a bug. The only bug that can spread the disease is the triatomine, or the "Kissing Bug". People can also get Chagas by:

- Eating uncooked meat that has the parasite in it
- From pregnant mother to her unborn baby
- Blood transfusion from a donor who has Chagas
- Organ transplantation from a donor who has Chagas
- Exposure in a lab

Chagas is not spread by direct person to person contact.

Who is at risk for Chagas?

The bugs are found in homes in Latin America that are made from mud, adobe, straw, or palm thatch. People who sleep in these homes at night are at risk of being bitten by the kissing bug when they sleep.

How is Chagas treated?

There are medicines that will kill the parasite. You can only get these medicines from a doctor who will get them from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

How is Chagas prevented?

There are no drugs or vaccines to prevent Chagas. People who travel to high risk countries should sleep indoors, in well-made homes with window screens or air conditioning.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas/>

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