



## Vector-Borne Chagas

Chagas is caused by the parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi* which is transmitted to people via insect vectors. It is mostly spread in rural Latin America. However, it is estimated that around 8 million people living in Mexico, Central America, and South America unknowingly have Chagas disease.

### How Chagas is Transmitted

Chagas is spread by infected triatomine bugs, more commonly known as kissing bugs because they bite and defecate on people's face. The disease is spread when the bug feces enter the body via mucous membranes or breaks in the skin.

People can also become infected through:

- Blood transfusions
- Organ transplants
- Consumption of uncooked food that is contaminated with feces from infected kissing bugs
- Congenital transmission

### Signs & Symptoms

There are two phases of Chagas

#### Acute phase

This phase lasts for a few weeks or months following infection. People may have no symptoms or slight moderate ones. Flu-like symptoms are common, but a trademark tell is Romaña's sign, where a person's eyelid swells.

#### Chronic phase

This phase can last decades or the entirety of someone's life. Many have no symptoms, but the few that do may develop cardiac or gastrointestinal complications.

#### Treatment

There are two treatment options:

**Antiparasitic** - kills the parasite

**Symptomatic** - manages the symptoms and signs of infection

### Donating Blood? Here's What You Need to Know!

Each donor is screened for risk of transmissible disease by questionnaire, and each unit of blood donated in the U.S. is routinely screened for various infectious disease pathogens using FDA approved assays.

#### Test Used to Screen Donated Blood

Infectious Disease Pathogen	<i>Trypanosoma cruzi</i> (Chagas disease)
Laboratory Test Used	T. cruzi antibody detection
Frequency of Test	All first-time donors tested