

FDA approves new test for Chagas disease

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The Food and Drug Administration has approved Abbott Laboratories' ESA test for Chagas disease, which could be a useful tool in protecting the nation's blood supply from contamination.

Chagas disease is caused by a parasite, *Trypanosoma cruzi*, which can be found in the triatomine bug's feces. The bug, which flourishes in parts of Latin America (including Mexico), often lives in the walls of mud, thatch or adobe huts and comes out at night to feed on sleeping humans, according to the Mayo Clinic.

While there are triatomine bugs in the United States, it's rare to find them carrying Chagas disease. Still, the parasite can spread in a number of ways, such as being passed from a pregnant mother to her child or introduced into the [blood supply](#) by donors who may have lived in or traveled to a country where the disease is common. There are more than 300,000 people with the disease in the United States, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

In the first few weeks or months, symptoms of the disease can include swelling, fever, nausea and swollen glands. Long-term, some symptoms may not show up for 10 or 20 years after infection, and in severe cases can lead to [cardiac arrest](#).

Best way to avoid such bugs? When traveling, don't sleep in mud, thatch or adobe houses, says the Mayo Clinic, and make good use of insecticide.

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