



To: CAHAN San Diego Participants

Date: April 10, 2024

From: Public Health Services

Health Advisory: Disease Reporting Requirement: Chagas Disease Now Locally Reportable in San Diego County

Key Messages

- Effective April 10, 2024, health care providers, laboratories, and blood banks will be [required to report Chagas disease](#) positive laboratory tests to the County of San Diego (CoSD) Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch (EISB).
- Chagas disease is detected every year in San Diego County primarily among persons who have resided in or travelled (for greater than 6 months) through continental Latin America, a Chagas disease-endemic region.
- Left untreated, up to 30% of persons with chronic Chagas disease infections develop cardiac or gastrointestinal complications (e.g., cardiomyopathy or megacolon) requiring organ transplantation.

Situation

Previously, the County Epidemiology program received voluntary reports of *Trypanosoma cruzi* infection, or Chagas disease, each year. Retrospective case finding for Chagas disease, conducted by the County at sentinel healthcare facilities and San Diego blood bank during 2018–2023, identified 98 people with initial laboratory-positive tests. The majority were identified through routine blood bank screenings. Because Chagas disease infection can be lifelong, healthcare provider awareness of early Chagas disease screening and treatment could prevent outcomes of chronic infection, including cardiomyopathy and the need for organ transplantation.

Background

Transmitted by the triatomine or conenose bug, Chagas disease is endemic in regions of Mexico, Central America, and South America, where an estimated [8 million people are infected](#). Triatomines thrive in rural settings and poor housing conditions (e.g., mud walls or thatched roofs), facilitating transmission to persons living in these dwellings. In addition, vertical (transplacental) transmission occurs in up to [5% of infants](#) born to infected mothers, and recommendations advise to avoid breastfeeding in the event of cracked or bleeding nipples. Routine donor screening helps to prevent transmission among blood and organ donors.

An estimated 30% of infected persons with Chagas disease develop chronic disease, predominantly cardiac complications. Cardiac disease usually begins with conduction abnormalities, such as right [bundle branch block or left anterior fascicular block](#), and can be followed by cardiomyopathy. Later cardiac disease manifestations can include apical aneurysm and thrombus formation. Persons who

contract Chagas disease can also experience gastrointestinal disease (megasyndromes). After these chronic manifestations are established (e.g., cardiomyopathy or megasyndromes), antiparasitic treatment will not reverse the disease complications.

Actions Requested

1. **Review** current recommendations on [prevention](#), [screening](#), [diagnosis](#), and [treatment](#) of Chagas disease. Join the upcoming symposium on April 12th for [World Chagas Day](#).
2. **Screen** for Chagas disease in patients with a known exposure (e.g., triatomine, Chagas disease-endemic country residence or travel, or birth to an exposed or infected person) to facilitate early intervention.
3. **Report** Chagas positive laboratory tests to CoSD EISB within 7 days after receipt of the positive result by completing the [Confidential Morbidity Report \(CMR\)](#), which can be faxed to the County Epidemiology Unit at 858-715-6458 or sent by secure email to epi-cdreporting.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov.
 - The Epidemiology Unit can be contacted by calling 619-692-8499 during normal business hours (Monday–Friday 8 AM–5 PM)

Resources

International

- [World Chagas Disease Day | Global Health | WHO](#)

National

- [Chagas Disease | CDC](#)
- [Chagas Disease - Congenital Chagas Disease | CDC](#)
- [Chagas Disease: Optimizing Care for Pregnant Women and Children | CDC](#)
- [Chagas Disease - Resources for Health Professionals - Antiparasitic Treatment | CDC](#)
- [DPDx - American Trypanosomiasis | CDC](#)
- [Lampit \(nifurtimox\) Prescribing Information | FDA](#)
- [Parasites - Continuing Education - Chagas Disease: What U.S. Clinicians Need to Know | CDC](#)

State

- [Conenose \(Kissing\) Bugs and Chagas Disease | CDPH](#)

Local

- [Chagas Disease | CoSD](#)
- [Disease Reporting for HCPS | CoSD](#)
- [Kissing Bugs | CoSD](#)

Thank you for your participation.

CAHAN San Diego

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