



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Chagas Disease

It can feel intimidating being diagnosed with Chagas, but understanding your condition is the first step to taking control of it. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Acute vs. Chronic Phase	Chagas disease generally happens in two phases. The acute phase occurs shortly after getting infected, when symptoms are mild or nonexistent. The chronic phase becomes apparent years or even decades later, when cardiac or intestinal complications caused by the parasite start to appear.
American Trypanosomiasis	American trypanosomiasis is another way to say Chagas disease.
Cardiomyopathy	Cardiomyopathy is when the heart is enlarged. This can happen during the chronic phase of the infection.
EKG	An electrocardiogram (or EKG) is a test doctors use to see if there are any issues with the electrical activity in your heart.
Triatomine Bugs	More commonly referred to as “kissing bugs,” triatomine bugs are the proximate reason people get infected with the Chagas disease parasite. These bugs typically live in houses made from adobe, mud, palm thatch, or straw. When the home’s human occupants are sleeping at night, the bugs come out to bite people’s faces, infecting them with the parasite.
Trypanosoma Cruzi	Trypanosoma cruzi is the parasite that causes Chagas disease. It’s transmitted to people and animals through the bites of triatomine (or “kissing”) bugs.
Romaña’s Sign	The most recognizable symptom of the acute phase of Chagas disease, Romaña’s sign is when your eyelids swell up, either because they’re near a bite mark or because the bug’s feces got into the eye accidentally.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your Chagas.

About Symptoms

- I know that Chagas disease often doesn't have symptoms, but what signs should I watch out for that could signal cardiac or intestinal complications?
- Does anything in my health history make it more likely that I'll have a heart attack or develop other heart issues due to Chagas disease?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- How can I check my home for kissing bugs? What can I use to keep them out of the house or from biting me and my family?
- What else might have increased my risk for getting Chagas disease?
- How likely is it that I will go onto develop heart issues?

About Diagnosis

- Can you walk me through the lab test results confirming the diagnosis of Chagas disease? What exactly did the test look for?
- Should I get an EKG or other tests to check my cardiovascular health?
- Is there a need to check for intestinal complications like an enlarged esophagus?
- Should my family members be tested for Chagas?

About Treatment

- Can I take an antiparasitic medication even if I'm already in the chronic phase of Chagas disease? If so, will you walk me through the side effects of the treatment?
- How frequently should my heart be checked for cardiomyopathy or arrhythmia?
- What lifestyle changes can I make to reduce the likelihood of heart or intestinal issues as a result of the infection?
- What bug sprays are safe for me to use at home?
