What is Chagas disease?
Chagas disease is caused by the parasite Trypanosoma cruzi and is spread by infected bugs called triatomines.

Where is Chagas found?
Endemic throughout much of Mexico, Central America, and South America

Who is at risk?
- Persons living in the U.S. who have migrated from endemic areas
- Estimates of 300,000 or more infected Latin Americans living in the U.S.

How is the disease transmitted?
- Triatomines thrive in poorly constructed and usually rural housing, typically living within cracked mud walls and thatched roofs
- During the night, the bugs emerge from their hiding places to feed, defecate, and thus inoculate
- Also transmitted by:
  » Blood transfusion
  » Organ transplantation
  » Congenitally
  » Lab accident (rare)
  » Food or drink (rare)
- Screening for Chagas disease instituted in early 2007

What are the phases of the disease?
**Acute**
- 4–8 weeks
- Asymptomatic or characterized by mild illness

**Chronic**
- Indeterminate
  - Typically asymptomatic for years or decades

**Symptomatic**
- 20-30% of chronically infected persons develop symptomatic disease
- Cardiac disease beginning with conduction abnormalities may be followed by apical aneurysm and thrombus formation
- Gastrointestinal manifestations
- Increased risk of stroke

Diagnosing Chagas Disease
- Detailed patient history including having seen the bug and having stayed within mud walls or thatched roofs, in a country with known Chagas risk
- Hispanic patients may be familiar with other names for the insect such as “kissing bug,” “benchuca,” “vinchuca,” “chinche” or “barbeiro”
- Serum samples may be sent to CDC through your state health department
- Patients should be reassured that contact for testing or treatment will have no effect on immigration status

Treatment of Chagas Disease
- Two drugs, nifurtimox and benznidazole, are worldwide standard antiparasitic treatment
- For more information, please visit the Chagas website at www.cdc.gov/parasites/chagas and click “Resources for Health Professionals” or call 404.718.4745 for clinical consults
- Fact sheets and contact information provided on the web