

Chagas disease ^[1]

Chagas disease, also known as American trypanosomiasis, is a potentially life-threatening illness caused by the protozoan parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi*¹.

In most cases, Chagas disease begins with a bite by the triatomine bug, also known as the “kissing bug” because it bites people’s faces when they sleep. Often people are infected without even noticing it. The disease can be silent for decades until, in some cases, people suddenly feel breathless, weak, and their hearts start beating erratically, so they go to the emergency room - and that’s when they find out they have Chagas disease.

The disease affects approximately 6 million people¹, mainly in Latin America. Less than 1% of affected individuals receive proper treatment², and current tools to fight the disease are outdated and inadequate.



The disease sits at the crossroads between two worlds: it starts as a tropical parasitic disease but can end as a chronic disease. This is why preventing, treating and managing Chagas disease requires an integrated, end-to-end approach that covers both the acute and chronic phases.

Improving health outcomes for Chagas patients also requires being active on three fronts: novel drug discovery, clinical research, and healthcare system strengthening.

Current efforts at the Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases (NITD) ^[2] aim to deliver anti-parasitic compounds with an improved safety and efficacy profile compared to current available therapies. Further, we have developed a promising portfolio of novel drug candidates for the treatment of kinetoplastid diseases such as visceral leishmaniasis, which have a novel mechanism of action that is also being investigated for Chagas disease.



During the chronic phase, when the disease evolves, it affects key organs as the heart, leading to cardiac disorders in up to 30% of patients. Chagas cardiomyopathy accounts for the majority of death and disability among individuals affected by the disease. Against this background, Novartis launched in 2019 the first clinical study in people with chronic Chagas cardiomyopathy [3] to assess an innovative therapy in this underserved patient population.

Further, we are working with health authorities and stakeholders in Latin America on healthcare system strengthening initiatives to improve health outcomes and access to innovation with the goal of ensuring no patient is left behind. Therefore, together with our partners, we are co-creating tailored access-to-medicine programs for patients to benefit from the best available care at a price they can afford.

Since 2018, we have partnered with the World Heart Federation to develop an end-to-end roadmap [4] that explores the patient journey from diagnosis to treatment, and provides actionable recommendations for policymakers and healthcare professionals.

In 2019, Novartis joined the Global Chagas Disease Coalition [5], an alliance to increase disease awareness and foster synergies in controlling the disease and promoting access to

diagnosis and treatment.

[Read the press release](#) [3]

[Download Chagas Disease factsheet](#) [6]

[Read the photo story Chagas Disease: Breaking the silence](#) [7]

World Heart Day 2020: From our heart to yours

For the past six decades, Novartis has been working to advance heart health around the world.

[Learn More](#) [8]

World Chagas Disease Day 2020

Novartis is committed to reimagining the fight against Chagas Disease and advocating for an integrated, end-to-end care approach.

[Learn More](#) [9]

Footnotes:

1. World Health Organization: [https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/chagas-disease-\(american-trypanosomiasis\)](https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/chagas-disease-(american-trypanosomiasis)) [10]
2. Barcelona Institute for Global Health: <https://www.isglobal.org/en/enfermedad-de-chagas> [11]

Source URL: <https://www.novartis.com/our-impact/global-health/chagas-disease>

Links

- [1] <https://www.novartis.com/our-impact/global-health/chagas-disease>
- [2] <https://www.novartis.com/our-science/novartis-institutes-biomedical-research/research-locations/novartis-institute-tropical>
- [3] <https://www.novartis.com/news/media-releases/novartis-joins-global-chagas-disease-coalition-and-also-announces-first-multinational-prospective-randomized-study-people-chronic-chagas-cardiomyopathy>
- [4] <https://www.world-heart-federation.org/cvd-roadmaps/chagas>
- [5] <http://www.coalicionchagas.org/en/>
- [6] <https://www.novartis.com/news/media-library/chagas-disease>
- [7] <https://www.novartis.com/stories/access-healthcare/chagas-disease-breaking-silence>
- [8] <https://www.novartis.com/news/world-heart-day-2020-from-our-heart-yours>
- [9] <https://www.novartis.com/news/world-chagas-disease-day-2020>
- [10] [https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/chagas-disease-\(american-trypanosomiasis\)](https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/chagas-disease-(american-trypanosomiasis))
- [11] <https://www.isglobal.org/en/enfermedad-de-chagas>