



Dr. med. Bodo Grahlke

Facharzt Gynäkologie und
Geburtshilfe FMH

Chagas disease



Chagas disease is endemic in several countries in Latin America. These include:

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Mexican
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Uruguay
- Venezuela¹²

This disease is mainly transmitted by the parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi*, which is spread by predatory bugs (Triatominae)².

One to two weeks after the bite of the triatomina and the associated transmission of the protozoa, the early stage of the disease develops, which usually proceeds with no or only mild symptoms and can include fever, swollen lymph nodes, headache or general malaise. Sometimes a swollen nodule develops at the site of infection, indicating the insect bite and the possibility of parasitic transmission.

The subsequent latency phase, during which the infection remains symptom-free, can last for decades. A third of infected people later develop serious complications such as nerve and heart diseases (cardiomyopathy, a disease with a pathological change in the heart muscle tissue that impairs the functioning and pumping capacity of the heart), abnormal dilations of the esophagus and colon.

The infection can be transmitted to the unborn child during pregnancy, and the babies are born without symptoms.

Therefore, pregnant and non-pregnant women of childbearing age should be examined, because there are drugs available that require 60 days of treatment.