

For the Health of It

Clark County Health Department

Oct 1, 2025

VOLUME 8
ISSUE 4

NOTABLE NEWS

CLINIC CORRESPONDENCE

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Mental Health and Living with HIV

Living with HIV presents not only physical health challenges but also emotional and psychological ones. Mental health is a crucial part of overall well-being for people living with HIV, yet it is often overlooked. Anxiety, depression and stigma related stress are common experiences that can affect treatment, adherence and quality of life.

The psychological impact of an HIV diagnosis can be profound. Many individuals face fear, shame or social isolation, especially in communities where HIV stigma remains strong. This emotional burden can lead to mental health issues, which, if left unaddressed, may interfere with a person's ability to stay on antiretroviral therapy, attend regular medical appointments or maintain healthy relationships.

Support networks, whether through friends, family, therapy or peer groups play a vital role in improving mental well-being. Access to mental health services, culturally sensitive counseling and community support programs can make a meaningful difference. Additionally, promoting open conversations about mental health and HIV helps reduce stigma and encourages people to seek help early.

If you are in need of resources or assistance in finding a mental health provider, please speak to your non-medical case manager.

Smoking Cessation Resources

Quitting smoking is one of the most important steps to improve health and extend life. Smoking increases the risk of serious complications like heart disease, cancer and infections. The good news: quitting at any time brings immediate and long-term health benefits. Support is available for nicotine replacement therapies and medications to counseling and quit lines. Below are some resources to help you quit. For more resources or information, feel free to ask you non-medical case manager or physician.

- Quit Now Indiana: <https://www.quitnowindiana.com>
- Indiana Tobacco Quitline: www.in.gov/health/tpc/cessation/indiana-tobacco-quitline
- Vape-Free Indiana: <https://www.in.gov/vapefreeindiana>
- Smoke-Free Housing Indiana: <https://www.smokefreehousingindiana.com>

Congratulations

Huge shout out to 3 of our employees who have recently earned their Master's Degrees:

Jesse Shields

Candice Orman

Casey Dayvault

Way to go!



PROTECTING OUR LITTLEST CLARK COUNTY RESIDENTS: SIDS AWARENESS MONTH

As the leaves begin to turn and we welcome the crisp autumn air, we also recognize October as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Awareness Month. This month serves as a vital reminder to our community about the importance of safe sleep practices for our littlest ones.

Losing an infant to SIDS or any sleep-related cause is a profound and heartbreaking tragedy. While SIDS is rare, it remains a leading cause of death for infants between one month and one year of age. The good news is that we can significantly reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related infant deaths by following simple, evidence-based safe sleep guidelines.

The ABCs of Safe Sleep: Simple Steps, Big Impact

At the Clark County Health Department, we want every family to feel confident and empowered to provide a safe sleep environment for their baby. Remember the ABCs of Safe Sleep:

- **A – ALONE:** Your baby should always sleep alone in their own sleep space. No co-sleeping in an adult bed, on a couch, or in a chair.
- **B – BACK:** Always place your baby on their back to sleep for every sleep, whether it's a nap or overnight. This is crucial even if they can roll over.
- **C – Crib:** Your baby should sleep in a firm, flat sleep surface such as a safety-approved crib, bassinet, or play yard. Ensure there are no soft objects in the sleep area – this means no loose blankets, pillows, bumper pads, stuffed animals, or other soft toys. A fitted sheet is all you need.



Following these guidelines helps prevent accidental suffocation, strangulation, and overheating, which are major risk factors for sleep-related infant deaths. While we understand the desire to cuddle your baby close, especially during sleep, an infant's own separate sleep space is the safest option.

Beyond the ABCs: Additional Ways to Promote Safe Sleep

- Room Share, Don't Bed Share: Keep your baby's sleep space in your bedroom, close to your bed. This makes nighttime feedings and comforting easier while still providing a safe, separate space for your baby.
- Avoid Overheating: Dress your baby in light sleep clothing (like a wearable blanket or sleep sack) instead of using loose blankets. Keep the room at a comfortable temperature.
- Offer a Pacifier: Research suggests that offering a pacifier at naptime and bedtime may reduce the risk of SIDS (after breastfeeding is well-established).
- No Smoking Around Your Baby: Exposure to smoke significantly increases the risk of SIDS.
- Tummy Time is Key (When Awake!): Supervised tummy time helps build strong neck and shoulder muscles and prevents flat spots.

How the Clark County Health Department is Helping:

This October, and year-round, the Clark County Health Department is committed to supporting our families. We are working to:

- Provide Free Safe Sleep Resources: We offer educational materials and, for qualifying families, can assist with obtaining a safe sleep environment like a Pack 'n Play.
- Partner with Our Community: We collaborate with local childcare centers, and community groups to spread consistent safe sleep messages.

Join Us in Making a Difference!!!

The power to protect our babies lies within our community. Share this vital information with expectant parents, new parents, grandparents, and anyone who cares for an infant. A simple conversation about safe sleep can save a life.

For more information on safe sleep practices or to learn about our local resources, please contact the Health Department at 812-282-7521 or visit our website at <https://www.clarkhealth.net>.

ONE HEALTH: Give me a Kiss!

There have been so many One Health topics in the news lately that it was hard to pick just one. Screwworm? Campylobacter from puppy stores? HPAI? Alpha-Gal? Then, one story caught my eye: expansion of the geographical distribution of kissing bugs.

A number of years ago, I was staying at a research base in the jungle of Belize. One morning, there was a gorgeous insect that I hadn't seen before in the kitchen area, which I picked up, photographed, and released outside for a better chance at survival. I showed the photo to a Belizean who immediately said 'Oh no! Did it bite you?'. Little did I know this was an infamous kissing bug.

Adorable name, right? Well, they get that name because they really love to bite their host around the soft flesh near mouths. They eat the blood of mammals. Gross is one thing, but they also carry a pretty nasty disease called Chagas disease.

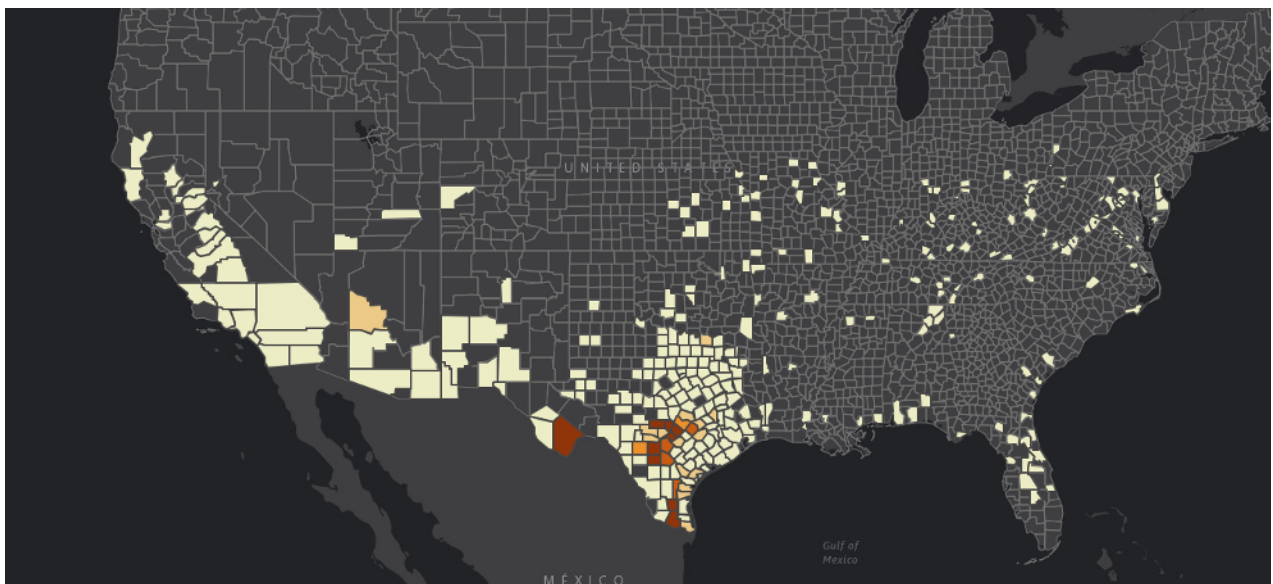


This is her!



Chagas disease is transmitted in the fecal matter of a parasitic protozoan *Trypanosoma cruzi*. It can infect human and non-human mammals. In the early stages of an infection, a person can be mildly symptomatic or completely asymptomatic. If the infection isn't treated, the illness may become chronic, leading to heart and digestive issues, up to and including death.

Historically believed to be a species in Central and South America, there are now 11 species of kissing bug spread throughout the central and southern United States. Check out this county distribution map: <https://kissingbug.tamu.edu/Map>. Climate change may be having an impact on their spread northward.

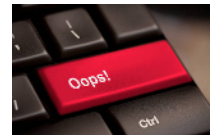


A recent study highlights: "Autochthonous human *T. cruzi* infections have been identified in 8 states: California, Arizona, Texas, Tennessee, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, and Arkansas. A systematic literature review found 29 confirmed and 47 suspected cases of locally acquired Chagas disease during 2000–2018; shared risk factors included rural residence, history of hunting or camping, and agricultural or outdoor work. Those numbers likely greatly underrepresent underlying human infections." (Beatty et al. 2025) .

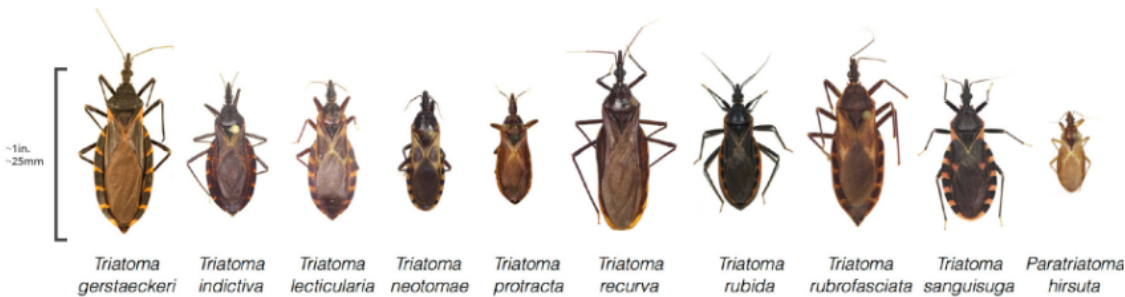
Yikes! Many health providers will miss the acute phase leading to underdiagnosis of this disease. With the spread in the distribution of the kissing bugs, the carrier of the Chagas parasite, we may see more and more cases of illness. Climate changes, such as regional changes in weather and temperature, have been linked to the spread of a number of vector borne, foodborne, waterborne, and zoonotic diseases.

So, should you worry? Some more common risk factors for Chagas include:

- Living in rural areas of Central America, South America and Mexico.
- Living in a building that has triatomine bugs.
- Getting blood or an organ from a donor who has the infection.
- Picking up and photographing random pretty bugs in the field.....

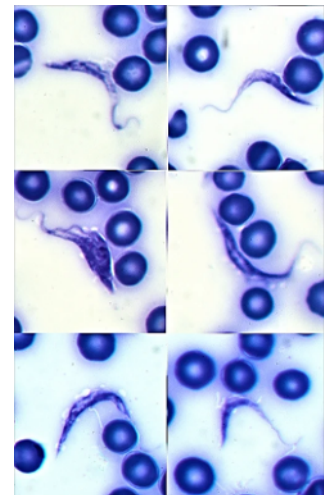


See your doctor if you have been in an area where Chagas disease is widespread and you have symptoms of the condition.



(Photo: Gabriel Hamer)

Examples of the 10 species of kissing bugs found in the US (one additional species is rarely recorded). The black bar represents approximately 1 inch, or 25mm.



Beatty NL, Hamer GL, Moreno-Peniche B, Mayes B, Hamer SA. Chagas Disease, an Endemic Disease in the United States. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2025;31(9):1691-1697. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid3109.241700>

<https://netec.org/2024/03/25/climate-change-and-infectious-diseases>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4264683>

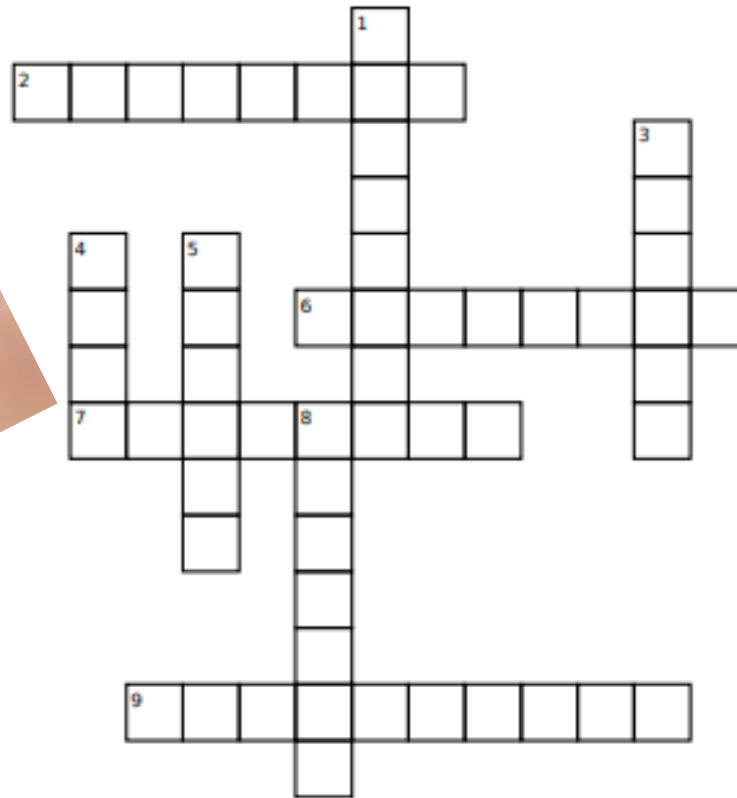
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/chagas-disease/symptoms-causes/syc-20356212>

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trypanosoma_cruzi_in_a_blood_smear.jpg

MENTAL HEALTH: BRAINGAMES



CROSSWORD



Down:

1. poorly named fungus you can get from animals or soil
3. An organism such as an insect that transmits a pathogen from one host to another
4. a common tick disease in North America
5. fatal disease transmitted from the bite of certain mammals
8. a disease that is constantly present in a population or community

Across:

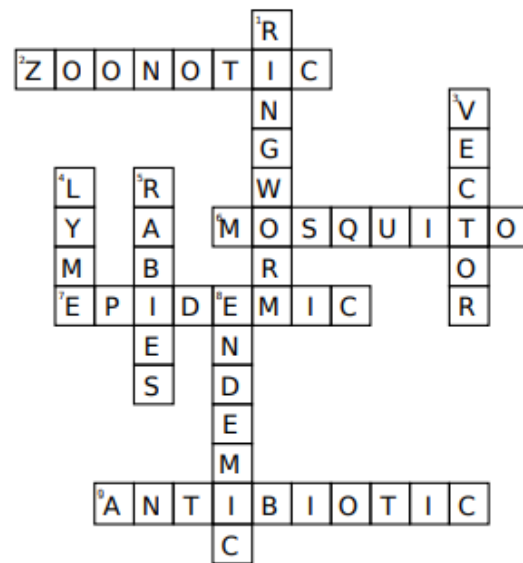
2. name for diseases transmitted from animals to humans
6. the most dangerous animal in the world
7. The occurrence of an illness in a region in excess of normal expectancy
9. substances or chemicals that can kill or inhibit the growth of bacteria

Artificial intelligence in public health: promises, challenges, and an agenda for policy makers and public health institutions

Dimitra Panteli, Keyrellous Adib, Stefan Buttigieg, Francisco Goiana-da-Silva, Katharina Ladewig, Natasha Azzopardi-Muscat, Josep Figueras, David Novillo-Ortiz, Martin McKee

Artificial intelligence (AI) can rapidly analyse large and complex datasets, extract tailored recommendations, support decision making, and improve the efficiency of many tasks that involve the processing of data, text, or images. As such, AI has the potential to revolutionise public health practice and research, but accompanying challenges need to be addressed. AI can be used to support public health surveillance, epidemiological research, communication, the allocation of resources, and other forms of decision making. It can also improve productivity in daily public health work. Core challenges to its widespread adoption span equity, accountability, data privacy, the need for robust digital infrastructures, and workforce skills. Policy makers must acknowledge that robust regulatory frameworks covering the lifecycle of relevant technologies are needed, alongside sustained investment in infrastructure and workforce development. Public health institutions can play a key part in advancing the meaningful use of AI in public health by ensuring their staff are up to date regarding existing regulatory provisions and ethical principles for the development and use of AI technologies, thinking about how to prioritise equity in AI design and implementation, investing in systems that can securely process the large volumes of data needed for AI applications and in data governance and cybersecurity, promoting the ethical use of AI through clear guidelines that align with human rights and the public good, and considering AI's environmental impact.

Crossword Answers:



[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpub/PIIS2468-2667\(25\)00036-2.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpub/PIIS2468-2667(25)00036-2.pdf)

Panteli, Dimitra, et al. "Artificial intelligence in public health: promises, challenges, and an agenda for policy makers and public health institutions." *The Lancet Public Health* 10.5 (2025): e428-e432.

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Monday - Friday:

8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Saturday - CLOSED

Sunday - CLOSED

Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Clark County Health Department