

## DAILY NEWS

### HEALTH

# First case of mother-to-child Chagas disease in the U.S. reported

A boy born two years ago has become the first known child to acquire Chagas disease, dubbed the “new AIDS of America,” from his mother. When doctors learned that the child was infected, the baby was given a 60-day treatment of benznidazole and was cured.

BY [CHRISTINE ROBERTS](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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Chagas disease is often transmitted to humans by bites from blood-sucking insects that carry the *Trypanosoma cruzi* parasite.

A boy born two years ago has become the first known child to acquire Chagas disease, dubbed the “new AIDS of America,” from his mother, according to a report released Thursday.

The mother, a 31-year-old immigrant from Bolivia, delivered the baby by Cesarean section in Virginia in August 2010, according to the July 6 issue of CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

Two weeks after the birth, the mother admitted that she had been previously diagnosed with Chagas disease, prompting doctors to test the boy, who showed signs of being infected by *Trypanosoma cruzi*, the parasite that causes the disease.

Chagas disease, often transmitted to humans by bites from blood-sucking insects that carry the parasite, is said to be similar to AIDS in that it is difficult to detect and has a long incubation period before symptoms show, according to a study published in the journal PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases.

At least 8 million people are infected by the disease in the Western Hemisphere, mainly in Bolivia, Mexico, Colombia and Central America, The New York Times reports. About 300,000 people in the U.S. are believed to be infected, most of whom are immigrants.

Although this is the first case to be officially documented, it is estimated that between 65 to 638 cases of congenital Chagas disease are reported in the U.S. each year, the CDC report.

The baby was born when he was just 29 weeks old after he was found to be suffering from excess fluid around his heart, lungs and abdomen, the Centers for Disease Control relate in the July 6 issue of Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

Doctors first treated the child for sepsis, a bacterial infection, because they unaware of the mother's condition.

When doctors learned that the child was infected with Chagas, the baby was given a 60-day treatment of benznidazole and was cured.

The case emphasizes the need for heightened awareness of the disease in the U.S., so that pregnant women can undergo screening, the report said.

The child's story, according to the CDC, "illustrates that congenital Chagas disease, even when severe, might not be recognized, or diagnosis might be delayed because of the lack of defining clinical features, or because the diagnosis is not considered."

croberts@nydailynews.com

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