

VetterCare
Expert Pet Care. At Home.

A FREE KIT FOR FAMILIES OF DOGS WITH CHAGAS DISEASE

Dog Chagas Care Kit

Your vet decides the treatment. This kit helps you do your part: give heart medication on schedule, watch breathing and energy every day, keep kissing bugs away from home, and hand off your dog's care with confidence, whoever is giving it.

General information to use with your veterinarian. Not medical advice.

1. Medication schedule
2. Daily watch log
3. Signs to call your vet
4. Kissing bug home check
5. Care handoff sheet
6. Questions for your vet

STEP 1 · EVERY DOSE, AS PRESCRIBED

Medication schedule

Ask your vet to go through each blank with you. Heart medications must be given as directed. Don't change a dose or stop a medication without your vet.

Merck Veterinary Manual

Medication (name on the label)	Amount, as prescribed	Times of day	With food?	Refill by

If a dose is missed or late, my vet says _____

Food or salt limits _____ **Next recheck** _____

DOSES GIVEN · CHECK EACH BOX WHEN GIVEN

Medication + time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun

Avoid high-salt foods and table food, and choose sodium-free treats. A low-sodium diet is often advised for severe heart failure; ask your vet whether your dog needs one. (Merck Veterinary Manual)

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STEP 2 · ONE LINE PER DAY

Daily watch log

A rising breathing rate while your dog sleeps is an early clue that heart failure may be developing. Count it once a day and bring this log to every visit. Texas A&M Cardiology

1. Wait until your dog is sleeping quietly, or resting calmly
2. Watch the chest: one in-and-out is one breath
3. Count for 30 seconds, then multiply by 2
4. Write it below. My vet's "too high" number: _____

Date	Sleeping breaths per minute	Energy normal / low	Breathing easy / hard work	Appetite ate all / some / none	Fainting or collapse yes / no	Swelling belly or legs?	Notes cough, restless sleep, vet called?

Most dogs breathe 15 to 30 times a minute at rest; rates are much higher when a dog is hot, stressed or active, and that's OK. If the sleeping rate is high, count again a few times over the next couple of hours. If it stays high, contact your vet. (Texas A&M Cardiology) Fluid can collect in the belly and legs with heart failure. (Merck Veterinary Manual) Print as many copies as you need.

STEP 3 · KEEP THIS ON THE FRIDGE

Signs to call your vet

CALL YOUR VET RIGHT AWAY IF YOUR DOG

- Faints or collapses
- Breathes fast while asleep, and it stays fast
- Breathes fast and works hard to breathe
- Has a swollen belly
- Is a young dog with diarrhea, low energy, seizures or swollen lymph nodes
- May have eaten a kissing bug

A sleeping breathing rate consistently above about 30 a minute is abnormal; your vet may set a lower number for your dog. Fast breathing plus other signs, such as weakness, coughing or a swollen belly, may be an emergency. After hours, go to a veterinary emergency center.

Texas A&M Cardiology; Texas A&M Pet Talk; Texas DSHS

ALSO WORTH TELLING YOUR VET

- Weakness or tiring easily
- Coughing
- Eating less, or weight loss
- Restless sleep, changing positions
- Quiet, not interacting

These can be signs of heart disease or heart failure. Many dogs with Chagas show no signs at all, so ask your vet about checking your dog's heart. (Texas A&M Cardiology; Texas A&M Pet Talk; Merck Veterinary Manual; AKC Canine Health Foundation)

MY VET'S NUMBERS FOR MY DOG

Sleeping breathing rate that's too high _____

Go to the emergency hospital if _____

If your dog is experiencing an emergency, please contact your veterinarian or the nearest emergency animal hospital right away.

Our vet's phone _____ **Emergency hospital phone** _____

STEP 4 · WALK THE YARD, THEN CHECK THE HOUSE

Kissing bug home check

Kissing bugs live in all regions of Texas. They're most active in the warmer months, roughly May to October, come out at night and are drawn to lights. Texas DSHS; Texas A&M

YARD AND KENNEL

- [ ] Outdoor lights off at night, if it's safe
- [ ] Brush, rock and wood piles cleared
- [ ] Leaf litter and trash cleared
- [ ] Woodpiles away from the house, off the ground
- [ ] Dog house clean, crevices filled
- [ ] Outdoor kennel screened
- [ ] Rodents and animal nests dealt with

HOUSE AND DOG

- [ ] Gaps around doors, windows and baseboards sealed
- [ ] Window screens without holes
- [ ] Crawl-space openings sealed
- [ ] Chimney flue closed when not in use
- [ ] Pet food and water bowls inside
- [ ] Dog inside at night, or in a well-sealed place
- [ ] Dog's bedding checked for bugs

Ask a licensed pest control professional about a plan. If you use a pesticide, follow the label. (Texas DSHS; UTHealth / Texas A&M Kissing Bug guide; Texas A&M Pet Talk)

FOUND A KISSING BUG?

1. **Don't touch it with bare hands,** and don't crush it.
2. **Use a glove or small plastic bag** to pick it up. Keep it in a closed bag or small container.
3. **Freeze it** for a few hours.
4. **Clean surfaces it touched** with 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Read the bleach label first.
5. **Inside the home, or it may have bitten someone?** Contact your local health department. **Outside, no bite?** You can send it to the Texas A&M Kissing Bug program.
6. **Your dog may have eaten one?** Call your vet.

Date found _____ **Time** _____ **Inside / outside, where** _____

Texas A&M Kissing Bug program; UTHealth / Texas A&M Kissing Bug guide (hosted by Texas DSHS); Texas DSHS

STEP 5 · FOR ANYONE CARING FOR YOUR DOG

Care handoff sheet

Dog's name _____ Weight _____ Age _____

Our vet _____ Phone _____

Emergency hospital _____ Phone _____

My phone while I'm away _____

Medication (name on the label)	Amount, as prescribed	Times	Given with food?

MY DOG'S HEART

Usual sleeping breathing rate _____ Too high (from my vet) _____

Normal energy for my dog looks like _____

Signs my dog has had before _____

Food + amount _____ Times _____

Treats allowed _____

KISSING BUGS

Dog sleeps ☐ inside ☐ sealed kennel

Outdoor lights ☐ off at night

Food + water bowls ☐ kept inside

Bedding ☐ check for bugs

ASK YOUR VET, AND WRITE THEIR ANSWER HERE

Which signs mean my caregiver should go to the emergency hospital?

_____

If a dose is missed or late, what should happen?

_____

Use page 2 to log each day and page 3 for the signs to call about. (Texas A&M Cardiology; UTHealth / Texas A&M Kissing Bug guide; Texas DSHS)

STEP 6 · BRING THIS TO YOUR NEXT VISIT

Questions for your vet

1. Should my dog be tested for Chagas, and which tests do you recommend?
2. My dog tested positive. What does that mean for my dog?
3. Should my other dogs be tested?
4. How is my dog's heart, and how often should we check it?
5. What is each medication for, and what should I do if a dose is missed or late?
6. What sleeping breathing rate is too high for my dog?
7. Does my dog need a low-sodium diet?
8. Which signs mean I should go to the emergency hospital?
9. Should we see a veterinary cardiologist?

Sources. Texas Department of State Health Services, "Chagas Disease" and "Reported Cases of Animal Chagas Disease, Texas, 2013–2015" · UTHealth School of Public Health and Texas A&M, "Kissing Bugs & Chagas Disease: What You Need to Know" (2018, hosted by Texas DSHS) · Tenney et al., "Shelter Dogs as Sentinels for Trypanosoma cruzi Transmission across Texas," Emerging Infectious Diseases (2014) · Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, Pet Talk ("Chagas Disease in Dogs," 2015 and 2018) and press release (2025) · Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital Cardiology, "Measuring Your Pet's Breathing Rate" · Texas A&M Kissing Bug Citizen Science Program · Merck Veterinary Manual, "Trypanosomiasis in Animals" and "Heart Failure in Dogs" · AKC Canine Health Foundation · Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "About Chagas Disease."



NEED TO TRAVEL?

A veterinary professional can keep the schedule at home.

Chagas heart disease doesn't plan around trips. A VetterCare veterinary professional can give your dog's heart medication on your veterinarian's exact schedule and keep the daily watch log while you're away, following your veterinarian's written instructions. Your dog stays home, in a calm and familiar routine. You get photo updates while you're away, and you meet your veterinary professional in person before you leave.

vettercare.com

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In-home care across Greater Phoenix, Tucson, Prescott and Dallas–Fort Worth.

VetterCare gathers this information from published veterinary sources. It is general information, not veterinary advice, and doesn't replace an exam by your veterinarian. VetterCare veterinary professionals follow your veterinarian's instructions. If your pet is experiencing an emergency, contact your veterinarian or the nearest emergency animal hospital right away.

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