

Triatomine bugs, also known as kissing bugs, reduviid bugs and cone-nose bugs, are almost an inch long with elongated cone-shaped heads. The body is grayish-brown with a wide abdomen that has flattened sides. The flattened sides of the abdomen stick out beyond the wing margins and are marked with red, orange or yellow stripes. Nymphs (immatures) look similar to adults, but lack fully developed wings.

Adults are capable of flying and are attracted to lights at night. The insects can be drawn towards the house by leaving outside lights on at night. Once inside, they will find a host and feed at night. After engorging themselves, they move away from the host to hide in cracks and crevices during the day. Outside, the bugs can be found in animal bedding or nests such as doghouses, chicken coops or rodent nests.

Bites are often not felt at first, but can lead to itching, swelling and redness. Some people are allergic to the chemicals injected by the insect while feeding and for some may lead to an anaphylactic reaction.

Some Triatomine bugs can carry the parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi* which can cause Chagas disease in humans, dogs and other small mammals. *T. cruzi*, a protozoan, is transmitted via the insect's feces when it is scratched into a wound or rubbed into a mucous membrane. Immediate (acute) symptoms of Chagas may be swelling of the face (especially around the eye), swelling of other body areas, moderate to high fever and disturbance of the heart rhythm. Treatment is available during the acute phase, so see a physician as soon as possible if you suspect Chagas.



Image by Bart Drees.

To reduce the chance of Triatomine bugs entering the home, work on excluding them. Some of the following may help to seal the home to keep the bugs outside.

- Prune trees and shrubs so they do not touch or overhang the house
- Do not stack firewood or other items against the house
- Install weather stripping around loose fitting doors and windows- if you can see daylight around a door during the day, then the weather stripping should be replaced
- Block weep holes in brick or stone façade homes with copper mesh
- Use stainless steel mesh wire to block access points in the attic (i.e. vents)
- Keep window screens in good repair
- Turn off outside lights at night. If that is not possible, use "bug bulbs" that have a wavelength less attractive to insects

For more information contact:

Wizzie Brown

Urban IPM blog

<http://urban-ipm.blogspot.com>



@UrbanIPM

[facebook.com/UrbanIPM](https://www.facebook.com/UrbanIPM)

1600-B Smith Road Austin, TX 78721

ebrown@ag.tamu.edu

512-854-9600

The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service or the Texas A&M AgriLife Research is implied. Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, religion,

disability, or national origin.