



BOTULISM (INCLUDING INFANT BOTULISM)

WHAT IS BOTULISM?

BOTULISM IS A SERIOUS ILLNESS CAUSED BY A POISON THAT IS RELEASED BY THE BACTERIUM, ***Clostridium botulinum***. THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF BOTULISM: FOOD, WOUND, AND INFANT BOTULISM. EATING FOOD THAT HAS THE BOTULISM TOXIN CAUSES FOOD-BORNE BOTULISM. WOUND BOTULISM OCCURS WHEN ***Clostridium botulinum*** GETS INTO THE SKIN. BOTULISM IN INFANTS UNDER THE AGE OF ONE OCCURS WHEN THEY EAT SPECIFIC FOODS SUCH AS HONEY OR BREATHE AIR/DUST THAT CONTAINS THE BACTERIA.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

BOTULISM IS MOST OFTEN CAUSED BY BACTERIA THAT HAVE PRODUCED THE POISON IN A WOUND OR IN FOOD. IT IS NOT SPREAD BY **person-to-person contact**.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

ALL TYPES OF BOTULISM CAUSE SYMPTOMS THAT AFFECT THE NERVOUS SYSTEM. THE COMMON SYMPTOMS OF BOTULISM ARE: DOUBLE VISION, BLURRED VISION, DROOPING EYELIDS, SLURRED SPEECH, DIFFICULTY SWALLOWING, DRY MOUTH AND MUSCLE WEAKNESS THAT GOES DOWN THE BODY, FROM THE SHOULDERS, DOWN TO THE FEET. IF UNTREATED, THESE SYMPTOMS MAY LEAD TO PARALYSIS. INFANTS WITH BOTULISM APPEAR TIRED, DON'T WANT TO EAT, ARE CONSTIPATED, AND HAVE A WEAK CRY AND POOR MUSCLE TONE.

HOW SOON AFTER EXPOSURE WOULD SYMPTOMS DEVELOP?

SYMPTOMS GENERALLY BEGIN 12-36 HOURS AFTER EATING INFECTED FOOD, BUT MAY BEGIN AFTER JUST A FEW HOURS AND AS LATE AS 10 DAYS.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

TREATMENT INCLUDES MEDICATION AND HOSPITALIZATION, AND IT MAY TAKE WEEKS FOR THE PERSON TO GET BETTER. IF A PERSON IS NOT TREATED, THEY MAY NEED TO BE ON A BREATHING MACHINE FOR WEEKS AND NEED SERIOUS MEDICAL AND NURSING CARE. INFANT BOTULISM IS ALSO TREATED WITH MEDICATION.

IF I DEVELOP SYMPTOMS, WHAT DO I DO?

IF YOU SHOULD DEVELOP ANY OF THE SYMPTOMS ABOVE, CONTACT YOUR PHYSICIAN OR YOUR LOCAL HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY TO CHECK TO SEE IF YOU HAVE BOTULISM. KEEP ANY FOOD THAT YOU THINK IS INFECTED SO THAT IT CAN BE TESTED.

CAN BOTULISM BE PREVENTED?

ALL CANNED AND PRESERVED FOODS SHOULD BE PROPERLY PREPARED AND STORED. PERSONS WHO DO THEIR OWN CANNING AT HOME SHOULD FOLLOW STRICT CLEANING AND COOKING PROCEDURES. BULGING CONTAINERS SHOULD NOT BE OPENED AND FOODS WITH AN UNUSUAL SMELL SHOULD NOT BE EATEN OR EVEN TASTED. SOURCES OF INFANT BOTULISM, SUCH AS HONEY, SHOULD NOT BE FED TO INFANTS.