



Merlin disease code: 00510 Botulism, Foodborne

[Paper case report form](#) required



Specimens (food or clinical) must be sent to the Bureau of Public Health Laboratories and must be cleared through the Bureau of Epidemiology (850) 245-4401.

No Merlin extended data

This condition has been identified as a potential bioterrorism agent by the CDC.

Background

Botulism has several distinct clinical forms:

- Foodborne: An illness caused by ingestion of botulinum toxin with variable severity. Common symptoms are diplopia, blurred vision, and bulbar weakness. Symmetric paralysis may progress rapidly.
- Infant: An illness of infants <12 months of age, characterized by constipation, poor feeding, and “failure to thrive” that may be followed by progressive weakness, impaired respiration, and death.
- Wound: An illness resulting from toxin produced by *Clostridium botulinum* that has infected a wound. A history of a fresh, contaminated wound during the 2 weeks before onset of symptoms should be present. Common symptoms are diplopia, blurred vision, and bulbar weakness. Symmetric paralysis may progress rapidly.
- Other, Unspecified: An illness in a patient aged ≥ 12 months of age who has no history of ingestion of suspect food and has no wounds. Common symptoms are diplopia, blurred vision, and bulbar weakness. Symmetric paralysis may progress rapidly.

Clinical criteria for case classification

Ingestion of botulinum toxin results in an illness of variable severity. Common symptoms are diplopia, blurred vision, and bulbar weakness. Symmetric paralysis may progress rapidly.

Laboratory criteria for case classification

Either of the following:

- Detection of botulinum toxin in a clinical specimen or food for foodborne botulism
- **Or** isolation of *Clostridium botulinum* from a clinical specimen.

Epidemiological criteria for case classification

Confirmatory:

A person who ate the same food as persons who have laboratory-confirmed botulism.

Presumptive:

A person with an epidemiological link, e.g., ingestion of a home-canned food within the 48 hours prior to onset.

Botulism, Foodborne (Continued)

Case classification

Confirmed:

Either of the following:

- A clinically compatible illness in a person with laboratory criteria
- **Or** a clinically compatible illness in a person with confirmatory epidemiologic criteria.

Probable:

A clinically compatible illness in a person with presumptive epidemiologic criteria.

Criteria to distinguish a new case from previous reports

Not applicable.

Comments

Note that this is one of the few diseases in which an epi-linked case without laboratory confirmation is considered confirmed.

Heptavalent botulinum antitoxin is available through the Bureau of Epidemiology at (850) 245-4401, 24 hours per day.