



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  $\geq 12$  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.

## 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.