

CDRS

Communicable Disease Reporting System

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE FACT SHEET

BOTULISM

Botulism is a rare but serious paralytic illness caused by a nerve toxin that is produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. There are three main kinds of botulism. Foodborne botulism is caused by eating foods that contain the botulism toxin. Wound botulism is caused by toxin produced from a wound infected with *Clostridium botulinum*. Infant botulism is caused by consuming the spores of the botulinum bacteria, which then grow in the intestines and release toxin. All forms of botulism can be fatal and are considered medical emergencies.

Symptoms

Symptoms start 12-36 hours and sometimes several days after eating a contaminated food and include:

- blurred vision
- dry mouth
- paralysis of the muscles, flaccid paralysis (limpness) that starts in the face and descends downward
- difficulty swallowing
- difficulty breathing
- vomiting
- constipation or diarrhea

Transmission

- *Clostridium botulinum* spores are common in the soil and can often be found on agricultural products.
- Poorly prepared, home canned vegetables and fruits are the most common source. Toxins are formed when foods are inadequately heated during canning.
- Unpasteurized honey can be a source of botulism for infants because honey often contains *Clostridium botulinum* spores.
- People can also get botulism in an open wound

Treatment

- Requires immediate medical attention.
- A medicine called anti-toxin is used to treat the toxin created by the bacteria

Prevention

- Follow proper home canning techniques (the time, pressure, and temperature required to destroy spores.)
- Never eat food from damaged cans
- Do not feed honey or honey-water to infants less than one-year of age.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice. For more information please call the Columbus Health Department at 645-1474.

Franklin County



Board of Health

Report Disease With Ease - 24 hours a day

www.cdrsinfo.com

Columbus and Franklin County Communicable Disease Reporting System

c/o The Franklin County Board of Health, 280 East Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43215

(614) 719-8888 ♦ (614) 719-8890 fax ♦ cdrs@franklincountyohio.gov - email

