

Family Guide to Home Care – BOTULISM

In the event of an intentional release of the toxin that causes BOTULISM, many people will need to be hospitalized. Treating BOTULISM requires supportive care in addition to antitoxin.

If you or any member of your family has any of the following symptoms, go to the nearest hospital or treatment center NOW. **Double vision, blurred vision, drooping eyelids, slurred speech, difficulty swallowing, dry mouth, muscle weakness**

Foods Associated With Botulism

- Low acidic foods (pH greater than 4.6)
- Home-canned foods
- Sausages
- Meat products
- Canned vegetables
- Seafood products
- Salsa
- Potatoes cooked in aluminum foil
- Honey
- Some commercially prepared foods
- Yogurt
- Cream cheese
- Jarred peanuts

Food and Cooking Precautions

BOTULISM toxin is inactivated by heat. Exposure to heat equal to or greater than 185 degrees F for at least five minutes will detoxify contaminated food or drink. **Heat foods thoroughly before eating.**

Foods suspected of contamination should be removed immediately from potential consumers and given to public health authorities for testing.

Protection from Aerosol Release

Awareness of an intended release of the BOTULISM toxin into the air would probably be too late to prevent exposure.

However, when exposure is anticipated, **covering the mouth and nose** with an undershirt, shirt, scarf, painter's or surgical mask or handkerchief will provide some protection.

Decontamination

After exposure to botulinum toxin, clothing and skin should be washed with soap and water. Exposed surfaces need to be cleaned with 10 percent household bleach solution.

If the patient with BOTULISM also has meningitis, droplet (breathing in droplets in the air) precautions need to be taken. Those around patients with meningitis should cover the mouth and nose when in close contact.

Use Everyday Sanitation Techniques

While BOTULISM is not contagious, it still makes sense to use "common sense" sanitation techniques.

- **Wash hands frequently**, especially after eating or drinking, after using the bathroom and after EVERY contact with those who are sick.
- Wash hands of those who are sick, especially after helping them use bathroom facilities, and before eating and drinking.

Care for Those Who are Sick

- Follow all medical instructions CAREFULLY. Be sure that those who are sick take all medication EXACTLY as prescribed.

Take Care of Yourself

Patients with BOTULISM will most likely be cared for in the hospital.

However, hospitalization also requires support and care from the family for those who are sick. You will not be able to help care for others if you do not also care for yourself.

- Get plenty of rest, drink lots of liquids, maintain a healthy diet.

Where to Get More Information

- Stay tuned to local media for ongoing updates
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** Public Response Hotline:
 - 888.246.2675 (English)
 - 888.246.2857 (Spanish)
 - 888.874.2646 (TTY)
- Texas Department of State Health Services Web site:
www.dshs.state.tx.us
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site:
www.cdc.gov
- Northeast Texas Public Health District web site:
www.healthpreparedness.org