



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Touchstone Consulting Group

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BOTULISM

Botulism is a serious disease that causes muscle paralysis and, when left untreated, death. The disease is rare, accounting for over 180 cases in the United States since 1977, but only resulting in two deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Of those cases, all were caused by some sort of food. To avoid this potentially life-threatening disease, it is important to know the different kinds of botulism

Kinds of Botulism

There are five main forms of botulism: foodborne, wound, infant, adult intestinal toxemia and iatrogenic.

Foodborne botulism happens by eating food contaminated with the toxin. Typically, improperly canned, preserved or fermented foods are the culprits.

Wound botulism happens when bacterial spores enter a wound. This can happen after a major accident, but is more common among injection drug users.

Infant botulism is the result of bacterial spores getting into an infant's intestines. Adult intestinal toxemia happens when the spores enter an adult's intestines, which is very rare.

Iatrogenic botulism can happen during cosmetic or medical procedures if too much of the toxin is used. The botulism toxin can help smooth wrinkles or help treat migraines, but is deadly in higher doses.

Symptoms

Symptoms for botulism include the following, according to the CDC:

- Double vision

- Blurred vision
- Drooping eyelids
- Slurred speech
- Difficulty swallowing
- Dry mouth
- Muscle weakness

Foodborne botulism symptoms usually present themselves between 18 to 36 hours after eating, but they can appear as soon as six hours or as late as 10 days.

Treatment

Treating botulism usually begins with an antitoxin that can help shorten recovery time. Patients will also need intense nursing or hospital care. Since botulism causes paralysis and respiratory failure, patients might also need to be placed on a breathing machine.

Prevention

Nearly all major outbreaks of botulism since 1980 have been from food-related contaminations. To help reduce your risk, be sure to do the following:

- Follow strict decontamination procedures when [canning foods at home](#).
- Keep oils infused with herbs refrigerated.
- Keep cooked potatoes hot until served or refrigerate them.
- Boil home-processed canned foods for 10 minutes before serving.

