

Botulism

What is it?

- Botulism is a rare but serious paralyzing illness caused by a toxin produced by the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*.
- There are 3 main kinds of botulism: foodborne, wound and intestinal.
- **Foodborne botulism** causes vomiting and/or diarrhea, then is followed by one or more of these symptoms:
 - drooping of eyelids
 - visual changes
 - dilated pupils
 - dry mouth
 - difficulty speaking
 - paralysis
 - constipation
- **Wound botulism** symptoms are like foodborne symptoms except there is no vomiting or diarrhea.
- **Intestinal botulism** symptoms include constipation followed by:
 - Lethargy (very tired, floppy)
 - poor feeding
 - difficulty swallowing
 - weakness
 - drooping eyelids

It affects mostly infants under one year of age, but can affect adults who have had gastrointestinal problems.

How is it spread?

- **Foodborne botulism** is caused by eating food contaminated with the *Clostridium botulinum* spore. Symptoms begin about 12 to 36 hours after eating contaminated food but can take up to 10 days to appear.
- **Wound botulism** is caused from contamination of wounds by soil or gravel, or injection of street drugs. Symptoms take about 10 days to appear.
- **Intestinal botulism** results from ingestion of *Clostridium botulinum* spores that then grow in the intestine. It is unknown how long it takes for symptoms to appear.

How is it diagnosed and treated?

- Blood and stool samples are taken to look for the Clostridium botulinum toxin.
- Antitoxin may be used to stop the action of the toxin in the blood.
- Severe symptoms such as breathing problems and paralysis may need to be treated in the hospital.

What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

- Food safety! Use good food preparation practices and hygiene.

For more information

<http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/botulism/>

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.
Clean your hands.**

