



**Botulism (*Clostridium botulinum* toxin)**  
 Information for Health Care Providers

Cause	<i>Clostridium botulinum</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Anaerobic, spore forming, toxin producing, gram-positive bacillus (rod shaped)</li> </ul>	
Systems Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neurological</li> </ul>	
Transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ingestion of contaminated food product</li> <li>▪ Ingestion of toxin (infant botulism)</li> <li>▪ Possible inhalation</li> <li>▪ No person-to-person transmission</li> </ul>	
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Immediately report any suspected or confirmed case of botulism to your local or state health department</li> <li>▪ Confirmed cases must be reported to the local health department within 24 hours</li> </ul>	
Incubation Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1-5 days</li> <li>▪ 24-36 hours if ingested, possibly longer if toxin is inhaled</li> </ul>	
Typical Signs/Symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Descending symmetrical paralysis</li> <li>▪ Malaise</li> <li>▪ Ptosis, double vision, photophobia</li> <li>▪ Dysphonia, dysarthria, dysphagia</li> <li>▪ Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea (foodborne)</li> </ul>	
Differential Diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Myasthenia gravis</li> <li>▪ Guillain-Barré syndrome</li> <li>▪ Tick paralysis</li> <li>▪ Stroke</li> <li>▪ Organophosphate poisoning</li> <li>▪ Atropine poisoning</li> <li>▪ Mushroom poisoning</li> <li>▪ Poliomyelitis</li> </ul>	
Laboratory	Specimens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Obtain specimens appropriate to the system affected:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Serum</li> <li>○ Stool</li> <li>○ Food product</li> <li>○ Gastric</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Clues to diagnosis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Classic symptoms</li> </ul>

Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Administration of trivalent (ABE) botulinum antitoxin (available through CDC)</li><li>▪ Botulism Immune Globulin IV (human derived and limited to infant botulism cases)</li><li>▪ Assisted ventilation in cases of respiratory failure</li></ul>
Precautions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Standard contact precautions</li></ul>