



## MACOMB COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# BOTULISM

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

### What is botulism?

- Botulism is a disease caused by the poison released from the bacterium Clostridium botulinum.
- There are three types of the disease: food borne botulism, wound botulism, and infant botulism.
- All three types are considered serious medical conditions and should be treated by a physician as soon as possible.
- In the event of a bioterrorist attack involving botulism, the toxin will most likely be released as an aerosol or used to contaminate foods.

### Can I get botulism from an infected person?

You cannot get botulism from an infected person.

### How will I know if I was exposed to the germ?

- It will depend on how the germ is released, where it was released, and where you were in relation to the release site.
- The further away you were from the release site the less likely it will be that you were exposed.

### How soon will symptoms develop (incubation period)?

- Symptoms may start as soon as 12-36 hours or as long as a couple of days after exposure to the toxin.
- The time will depend on the dose that is received.

### What are the symptoms of infection?

If you are exposed to the toxin by breathing or eating contaminated foods, you may develop the following symptoms:

- blurred or double vision
- difficulty breathing
- dry mouth
- possibly muscle paralysis
- difficulty swallowing



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**BOTULISM****FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)****How is the infection treated?**

- If you have the infection, your health care provider (doctor or nurse) may treat you with an antitoxin.
- You will also be closely monitored to make sure your symptoms do not get worse, and to properly take care of you if your symptoms do get worse.

**How is the infection prevented?**

- If the Macomb County Health Department determines that you were exposed to the germ, you will be offered an anti-toxin.
- You will also be closely monitored to ensure that you do not develop symptoms of the infection.

**What should I do if I DO NOT have symptoms?**

- If you do not have symptoms of the infection, you should continue with your routine daily activities.
- Please DO NOT go to the hospital emergency room unless you have any of the symptoms listed on page 1 and believe that you were exposed to the botulism toxin.

**How can I get health advisories or alerts?**

- In the event of a public health threat or emergency, the Macomb County Health Department will make frequent public announcements.
- Listen to local radio and TV for more information. You may also visit <http://macombcountymi.gov/publichealth> or call 586-466-7923 for instructions.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Macomb County Health Department  
 Emergency Preparedness Program  
 43525 Elizabeth Road  
 Mount Clemens, MI 48043  
 Phone: 586-469-5235  
 Fax: 586-469-5885

<http://macombcountymi.gov/publichealth>

**MORE BOTULISM INFORMATION**

- Botulism: Michigan Prepares (MDCH/OPHP) [http://michigan.gov/michiganprepares/0,1607,7-232-42666\\_42882\\_42953-150586-,00.html](http://michigan.gov/michiganprepares/0,1607,7-232-42666_42882_42953-150586-,00.html)
- Botulism (CDC) <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/botulism/>
- Botulism Fact Sheet (NIAID) <http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/healthscience/healthtopics/botulism/index.htm>
- Or call the CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO or 1-888-232-6348 (TTY).