

Title: Risk of botulism following "Botox" injections

In recent years, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has investigated](#) many cases of iatrogenic botulism following injections of counterfeit or mishandled botulinum toxin ("Botox") from individuals who were not following state or local licensure requirements. A suspect case of iatrogenic botulism was recently identified in [Multnomah County](#) and healthcare providers should familiarize themselves with the signs and symptoms of botulism, a serious and life-threatening infection. All suspect cases of botulism are [immediately reportable](#) to public health.

[Symptoms of botulism](#) include:

- Blurry or double vision
- Difficulty opening eyelids
- Difficulty swallowing
- Slurred speech
- Difficulty breathing
- Muscle weakness

These cranial nerve palsies typically occur symmetrically and may rapidly progress to a descending flaccid paralysis.

Healthcare providers should:

- Consider the possibility of adverse effects from Botox injection, including for cosmetic purposes, when patients present with signs and symptoms consistent with botulism near the injection site.
- Be aware of the overlap between the presentation of localized adverse effects from Botox injection and the early symptoms of botulism. To help distinguish early botulism symptoms and localized adverse effects:
 - Assess for symmetry of cranial nerve palsies. Botulism infection typically presents with symmetric cranial nerve deficits.
 - Assess for progression of cranial nerve palsies. Progression of symptoms is consistent with botulism infection.
- Be aware that botulism can progress rapidly to respiratory failure and death.
- If you suspect botulism, call the 24/7 on-call epidemiologist at Oregon Health Authority immediately at 971-673-1111.
- Counsel patients regarding the risk of Botox injections and that injections should only be provided by licensed medical providers trained in the administration of FDA-approved botulinum toxin products.

Additional resources:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention About Botulism](#)

For questions regarding botulism, please contact Dr. Melissa Sutton at melissa.sutton@oha.oregon.gov.

This Health Alert Network was sent to ORCD1 which includes hospitals, health officers, health administrators, preparedness coordinators, infection preventionists and communicable disease nurses and some Oregon Health Authority- Public Health Division staff.