

Botulism (*boch-oo-liz-um*) is a serious disease that paralyzes your muscles. It is caused by bacteria. There are 3 main kinds of botulism:

- Food botulism,
- Infant botulism, and
- Wound botulism.

## How could I get food botulism?

If you eat contaminated food, you can get botulism. Most people get sick within 12–36 hours. But sometimes it can take up to 2 weeks.

If many people who eat the same food get sick, the food may have been contaminated. If this happens, health officials will investigate. It is possible that terrorists could put these bacteria in food.

## Who can get infant botulism?

Babies, especially 6 months old or younger, can get this disease from contaminated food or dust. Babies who are not breastfed and babies who eat honey may be more likely to get infant botulism.

## How could I get wound botulism?

If the bacteria get into an open wound or cut, you can get this disease.

## Is botulism contagious?

No. You cannot get botulism from another person.

## How can I prevent botulism?

In most cases, you can prevent botulism by doing these things:

- Avoid improperly canned or spoiled foods,
- Clean wounds thoroughly, and
- Do not feed honey to babies.

## What are the symptoms of botulism?

You may have:

- Eye problems, like double or blurry vision and drooping eyelids,
- Slurred speech,
- Trouble swallowing, dry mouth, and
- Muscle weakness that starts in your shoulders or upper arms, and moves down your body.
- Your breathing muscles may get paralyzed. You may stop breathing and die.

## Can I die from botulism?

Yes. If you do not get help right away, you may stop breathing and die.

If you get help right away, you will probably recover. If your lungs stop working, you will need a breathing machine to help you breathe. It could take weeks or months to recover.

## What if I think I have botulism?

Call your doctor or hospital **right away**. They may give you a special medicine. If you take it soon after you get sick, it can ease your symptoms.



## For more information...

Call CDC (Centers for Disease Control) for information in English or Spanish:

800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)  
888-232-6348 (TTY)

Or visit: [www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/botulism](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/botulism)  
[www.dhs.ca.gov/epo](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/epo)