Botulism, Infant

**What is infant botulism?**
Infant botulism is a disease caused by a toxin produced when the intestines of very young children are infected with the bacterium, Clostridium botulinum.

**Who gets infant botulism?**
Children who get infant botulism are generally younger than six months of age. The spores of Clostridium botulinum are common in soil, and can also be found in a variety of foods and in dust. Infant botulism has been associated with feeding contaminated honey (and rarely corn syrup) to infants.

**How is infant botulism spread?**
Infant botulism is not contagious, and person-to-person transmission is not known to occur. To become infected, an infant must eat the bacterial spores that then multiply and produce the toxin in the digestive tract.

**What are the symptoms of infant botulism?**
The initial symptoms of infant botulism are constipation and poor feeding, followed by listlessness and weakness that may be severe enough to make the baby appear “floppy.”

**How soon do symptoms appear?**
The incubation period for infant botulism is unknown.

**What is the treatment for infant botulism?**
Hospital care is necessary. Neither antibiotics nor antitoxin have proven beneficial in treating infant botulism and may even make the illness worse. Most infants recover following supportive care in a hospital.

**What happens if infant botulism is not treated?**
Infant botulism may result in death.

**How can botulism be prevented?**
Identified sources of infant botulism, such as honey, should not be fed to infants.

**Where can I get more information?**
Contact your doctor or the Southern Nevada Health District, Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300.

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Updated 8-06