



BOTULISM CASE REPORT SUMMARY LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2012

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Four cases of botulism were confirmed and reported in 2012; all cases survived. One additional report of suspected botulism was not confirmed.

Two of the cases comprised a foodborne botulism outbreak. A cohabiting couple ingested soup that had not been refrigerated for over a week. One case was hospitalized for several days and received botulinum antitoxin. The other case was stable and was hospitalized for only one day for observation. Tests of several clinical specimens were negative for botulinum toxin and organisms for both cases; however the occurrence of clinically compatible botulism in two persons who had consumed a risky food item was sufficient to meet the case definition of a foodborne botulism outbreak. The investigation identified conflicting label instructions for food storage; this was brought to the attention of the federal Food and Drug Administration and the soup manufacturer, which took immediate steps to correct the labeling problem on its products nationwide. See the special report for details.

One case was classified as wound botulism. The case patient was an injection drug user with cellulitis; both serum and wound culture demonstrated botulinum toxin type A. The patient received antitoxin and recovered.

The fourth case also occurred in an injection drug user but was classified as a case of "other" botulism. Botulinum toxin type A was detected in the patient's serum obtained prior to treatment with antitoxin. No wound culture was obtained, but a stool sample also showed evidence of toxin type A, which would not happen in wound botulism. Before the patient could be questioned further about his recent food consumption, he left the hospital against medical advice. Lacking a history of exposure to a botulism-prone food item, the case could not be classified definitively as foodborne botulism.

The unconfirmed botulism suspect was an injection drug user who presented with a clinical picture similar to botulism, but additional tests confirmed myasthenia gravis. He did not receive antitoxin and no further botulism tests were conducted.

There were 14 cases of infant botulism confirmed by the California Department of Public Health, [Infant Botulism Treatment and Prevention Program](#)¹; ten were due to type A and four were due to type B toxin. Seven cases were Hispanic, six were white, non-Hispanic, and one was Asian. There were four female cases and ten male cases, with ages ranging from 48 to 240 days (mean, 136 days) at time of onset. All survived.

¹ Infant Botulism Treatment and Prevention Program. Division of Communicable Disease Control, California Department of Public Health. <http://www.infantbotulism.org/>.