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Botulism is a rare but a serious paralytic illness caused due to botulinum toxin, which is a metabolic waste produced under anaerobic condition by bacterium clostridium botulinum. The bacteria enter the body through wounds or may live in improperly canned and preserve food. It is also known as botulinum intoxication. There are five different types of botulism; foodborne botulism is caused by eating food that contains botulinum, wound botulism is caused due to toxin produce from wound infected with clostridium botulinum. Another type is infant botulinum; it is caused by consuming the spores of the botulinum bacteria which then grew in the intestine and release toxins. Adult intestinal toxemia is rarely found, it enters from the same route as infant botulinum.

Last type of botulism is iatrogenic botulism generally occurs from the accidental overdose of botulinum toxin. Foodborne botulism is more common among the all types as many people can be poisoned by eating a contaminated food. Whereas, all forms of botulism are considered a medical emergency.

Clostridium botulinum is present in the soil or contaminated water. It produces spores that survived in the improperly canned and preserved food, consuming the small amount of it can cause severe infection. Food that contains this bacterium is cured pork and ham, home-canned vegetables, smoked or raw fish, honey and corn syrup. Bacteria can also enter through the open wound and produce the toxin there. Infant botulism occurs when baby eats living bacteria or its sores grow in the gastrointestinal tract. Honey and corn soup are the most common cause of infant botulism. Clostridium botulism also occurs in the stool of some infants.

Botulism infection does not cause fever. Its symptoms generally appear 8-36 hours after you eat contaminated food. In adults symptoms may include abdominal cramps, breathing disorder that may lead to respiratory failure, difficulty swallowing and breathing, double vision, dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, weakness or paralysis. Symptoms in infants involve constipation, poor feeding and weak sucking, respiratory distress, weak cry and weakness and loss of muscle tone.

Consult your doctor if you face any of the botulism symptoms. To prevent your child from botulism avoid giving honey or corn soup, breastfeeding. Throw away the bulging cans or foul smelling preserved food; cook the food at 250 degree Fahrenheit to prevent you from botulism, keep foil wrapped baked potatoes in refrigerator instead of room temperature. Your doctor may perform few physical examinations, these may be signs of absent or decreased deep tender reflexes, absent or decreased gag reflex, eyelid drooping, loss of muscle function/ feeling, paralyzed bowel, speech impairment and urine retention with urine inability to urinate.

Appropriate treatment and prevention can help you live long lasting healthy life. Inaccurate treatment can lead to some complications like aspiration pneumonia and infection, long lasting weakness, nervous system problem for up to 1 year and respiratory distress.

Your health care provider may also provide you with medication to overcome the problem. Do not leave the treatment in the middle of it

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