County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Health Alert

June 25, 2024

Suspected Botulism Outbreak

The Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH) is actively investigating a multi-person outbreak of botulism, likely related to contaminated food consumed at a family event on June 21st in Caruthers and June 22nd in Clovis, California. All ill persons have been hospitalized and some have been intubated. A specific food source for their illness has not yet been determined. All clinicians are asked to consider botulism if patients present with neurologic symptoms suggestive of botulism.

Botulism is a **medical emergency** and can progress very quickly. Early and rapid administration of botulism anti-toxin is critical to prevent neurologic progression, so any patients suspected of having botulism should be sent to the nearest emergency room.

Clinical manifestations are characterized by acute onset of bilateral cranial neuropathies associated with generally symmetric descending weakness (e.g. extreme dryness of the mouth, dysarthria, dysphonia, difficulty swallowing, facial weakness, blurry vision, ptosis, difficulty breathing, trunk and extremity weakness followed by lower extremities). Nonspecific gastrointestinal symptoms may be seen, fever is usually absent. Patients remain responsive with no sensory deficits, except blurred vision. Death may occur from respiratory failure or superimposed infections.

The FCDPH is working closely with the California Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to address this matter. Any suspected cases of botulism should be reported **immediately** to the FCDPH Communicable Disease Investigation program at (559) 600-3332 or after hours at (559) 600-3111. For additional information on botulism, visit: Botulism (ca.gov)

Thank you for your assistance. We will keep you informed as more information becomes available.

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Categories of Health Alert Messages:

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention
Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action
Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action
Health Information: Provides general health information which is not considered to be of emergent nature