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Key messages:
- The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s Botulism Guide for Health Care Professionals has been updated effective March 2017.
- Botulism antitoxin (BAT) product Cangene® is now the standard treatment product in Canada.
- A non-travel acquired case of Vibrio Cholerae has been reported in Ontario. This update outlines details and testing criteria below.

Updated MOHLTC Botulism Guide for Health Care Professionals, March 2017 and New Botulism Antitoxin Product

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) Botulism Guide for Health Care Professionals was revised in March 2017. The new Botulism antitoxin (BAT) product Cangene® has now became the standard treatment product in Canada.

Clinical diagnosis of botulism

There are several clinically distinct forms of botulism: foodborne, infant and wound.

All forms produce neurological signs and symptoms, typically symmetrical cranial nerve palsies followed by descending, symmetric flaccid paralysis of voluntary muscles. Untreated, these neuropathies may progress to respiratory compromise and death.

Certain forms of botulism also present with gastrointestinal findings.

Botulism cases in Peel

There have been four botulism cases in Peel since 2013. Three adults acquired botulism from feseekh, a traditional salted mullet fish. One infant had suspected consumption of unpasteurized honey.

If you suspect a diagnosis of botulism:

1) Immediately request Botulism antitoxin (BAT) or Botulism Immune Globulin, Intravenous (Baby BIG®). This is ordered from the MOHLTC Population and Public Health Division. Do not delay treatment to wait for laboratory confirmation.

2) Obtain clinical specimens prior to administering botulism treatment. Call the Botulism Reference Service (BRS) for Canada to make arrangements for transporting clinical specimens and suspect food to the Ottawa laboratory for analysis.

3) Notify Peel Public Health. Suspected and confirmed botulism cases should be reported to Peel Public Health. Inspectors can assist with the collection of suspect foods from the cases to send to the Botulism Reference Laboratory. Call Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700.

Ontario-acquired Vibrio Cholerae case

Public Health Ontario (PHO) is supporting an investigation into a non-travel related case of toxigenic Vibrio cholerae serogroup O1 reported in Ontario.

The case under investigation had a symptom onset date of April 14, 2017.

PHO would like to remind clinicians of criteria for testing related to the identification and confirmation of Vibrio infection.

Vibrio testing

Consider testing patients with:
- Clinically compatible symptoms with Vibrio infection,
- Routine enteric cultures that are negative for other enteric pathogens, and
- No other obvious etiology

How to collect and transport clinical specimens

- Stool specimens should be collected in routine enteric stool transport medium (Cary-Blair), and kept refrigerated if possible. Specimens should be transported to the laboratory promptly to ensure optimal testing.

Complete this required information on the Public Health Ontario Laboratory general test requisition and include with the specimen:
- Explicitly request for Vibrio testing or Vibrio confirmation and serotyping
- Indicate that routine enteric culture negative for other enteric pathogens
- Indicate symptoms
- Indicate place and date of travel outside Ontario, if appropriate