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Key Messages:

- The Ministry of Health has updated the Botulism Guide for Health Care Professionals (October 2023) with new contact information for the Botulism Reference Services Lab.
- Treatment of botulism requires Botulism Anti-Toxin (BAT) or BabyBIG® (for suspected infant botulism in patients under 1 year of age).
- BabyBIG® is not approved for sale in Canada and can only be accessed from the California Department of Public Health by placing a request with Health Canada's Special Access Program (SAP).
- Treatment and management of botulism should be guided by clinical diagnosis.

REMINDER: Treatment of Botulism is Guided by Clinical Diagnosis

The initial diagnosis of botulism should be based on a history of potential recent exposure, consistent clinical signs and symptoms, and consideration of other illnesses in the differential diagnosis. Treatment of botulism requires Botulism Anti-Toxin (BAT) or BabyBIG® (for suspected infant botulism in patients under 1 year of age).

Do not delay treatment (BAT or BabyBIG®) by waiting for laboratory confirmation. Treatment and management decisions should be made based on clinical diagnosis.

UPDATE: The Botulism Guide for Health Care Professionals Has Been Updated (October 2023)

The Ministry of Health has released an updated version of the Botulism Guide for Health Care Professionals (October 2023) to reflect new contact information for the Botulism Reference Services Lab (page 13).

The Botulism Guide includes instructions on managing and treating botulism, as well as phone and fax numbers for the Ministry of Health, Health Canada's Special Access Program (SAP) and Botulism Reference Service:

<https://peelregion.ca/health/professionals/pdfs/2023/botulism-guide.pdf>

REMINDER: Clinical Presentation of Infant Botulism

Infant botulism affects infants under one year of age. It is caused by the ingestion of *Clostridium botulinum* spores, which then germinate in the intestine and produce bacteria that release toxin which is absorbed.

The earliest and most frequently observed symptom in infants is constipation followed by lethargy, poor feeding, ptosis, difficulty swallowing, hypotonia and generalized weakness (floppy baby) including a weak cry.

REMINDER: Ordering BabyBIG® for infant Botulism Cases

BabyBIG® is not approved for sale in Canada and can only be accessed from the California Department of Public Health by placing a request with Health Canada's Special Access Program (SAP). SAP requires that available marketed products in Canada be considered when a review is conducted during the ordering of BabyBIG® to treat infant botulism.

The marketed product in Canada, Botulism Anti-Toxin (BAT), has a recommended dose for infants under 1 year of age. However, due to lack of clinical evidence to support using BAT in infant botulism cases in the product monograph, clinicians can continue to order BabyBIG® for infant botulism cases. BabyBIG® has demonstrated safety and effectiveness in treating infant botulism.

Based on expert recommendations from pediatric infectious disease specialists, and in alignment with recommendations in other jurisdictions in Canada and internationally, Ontario supports the prompt initiation of BabyBIG® treatment in cases under 1 year of age with confirmed or strong clinical suspicion of infant botulism.

REMINDER: Process to order Botulism Anti-Toxin (BAT) and BabyBIG® (for infants under 1 year of age) ®

- 1) Place a request for BAT or Botulism Immune Globulin, Intravenous (BIG-IV); (Baby BIG®) for suspected infant botulism in patients under 1 years of age. BAT is ordered from the Ministry of Health. BabyBIG® is ordered via SAP. BAT and BabyBIG® can be ordered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Before placing an order, it is essential to read the instructions on ordering in the Botulism Guide:
<https://peelregion.ca/health/professionals/pdfs/2023/botulism-guide.pdf>

- 2) Obtain clinical specimens prior to administering treatment with Botulism Anti-Toxin. Call the Botulism Reference Service, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to arrange transportation of clinical specimens and suspect food to the Ottawa laboratory for analysis.
- 3) Notify Peel Public Health. Suspect and confirmed botulism cases must be reported to Peel Public Health. Information on the suspected food item (where applicable) should be provided during the call. Inspectors can assist with the collection of suspect foods from the case to send to the Botulism Reference Laboratory. Call Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700.

Botulism Cases in Peel

There has been one laboratory confirmed case of infant botulism in Peel in 2023.

Additional Information on Managing and Treating Botulism

The Ontario Public Health Standards, Infectious Disease Protocol, Botulism Appendix includes case definitions and disease specific information:

<https://files.ontario.ca/moh-ohs-botulism-en-2023.pdf>