

Epi Update for Friday, July 11, 2025

CENTER FOR ACUTE DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY (CADE)

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (Iowa HHS)

Items for this week's Epi Update include

- **Botulism risk from counterfeit Botox, injections from unlicensed individuals**
- **Infographic: Help protect your baby's health**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Botulism risk from counterfeit Botox, injections from unlicensed individuals

Botulism is a rare and sometimes fatal illness caused by botulinum toxin. Initial botulism symptoms may include double or blurred vision, drooping eyelids, slurred speech, difficulty swallowing, and difficulty breathing. These symptoms may be followed by a descending, symmetric muscle weakness that progresses over hours to days.

Adverse effects can occur after receiving injections with counterfeit botulinum toxin or when administered by unlicensed or untrained individuals or in non-healthcare settings, such as homes or spas. Cosmetic Botox injections contain the same toxin that causes botulism, and users could become sick with botulism if too much of the toxin is injected or if accidental intravascular injection occurs. For this reason, Botox injections should only be given by licensed providers who are trained in proper administration of FDA-approved botulinum toxin.

There may be symptom overlap between the presentation of localized adverse effects from injection of botulinum toxin, especially in the head and neck, and the early symptoms of botulism. To help distinguish early botulism symptoms from localized adverse effects, health care providers should:

- Assess for symmetry of cranial nerve palsies; symmetric cranial nerve palsies are expected with botulism.
- Assess for progression of cranial nerve palsies, possibly followed by a descending symmetric flaccid paralysis. These should raise suspicion for botulism.

Treating botulism patients with botulism antitoxin can prevent the progression of paralysis and consequent complications. However, antitoxin is not recommended for local effects of low-dose injections of botulinum toxin preparations, because the low doses of toxin are not likely to reach circulation or produce botulism with its life-threatening manifestations.

Botulism is immediately reportable in Iowa, and health care providers who suspect a patient might have botulism should contact CADE by calling 1-800-362-2736 during business hours or 515-323-4360 after hours and asking for the epidemiologist on call.

If you are concerned that you or someone you know might have symptoms of botulism, including trouble swallowing or breathing, see your doctor or go immediately to the emergency room.

For information on how to identify FDA-approved products visit, www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/counterfeit-version-botox-found-multiple-states.

For more information about botulism, visit www.cdc.gov/botulism/about/index.html.

Infographic: Help protect your baby's health

To view in full size, visit

content.govdelivery.com/attachments/IACIO/2025/04/17/file_attachments/3233873/April%20poster.pdf.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

The *2025 CDC Training for Vaccine-Preventable Disease Surveillance* is now available. Intended audiences include public health professionals, health care providers, and laboratorians. The training videos are split into two sessions – one for viral and one for bacterial vaccine-preventable diseases. Objectives include identifying the main levels of surveillance, the importance of case identification, application of case definitions, laboratory testing, data collection, and more. Continuing education credits are available. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/ncird-surveillance/resources/vpd-surv-training.html.

Have a healthy and happy week!
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
800-362-2736