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**CONTRA COSTA
PUBLIC HEALTH
COMMUNICABLE
DISEASE PROGRAMS**
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HEALTH ALERT

May 16, 2017

BOTULISM

SUMMARY:

Nine Persons with Foodborne Botulism Linked to Valley Oak Food and Fuel Gas Station in Walnut Grove

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH), in collaboration with Sacramento County Public Health (SCPH) and neighboring county public health departments, is conducting an investigation to determine possible causes of illness in patients recently hospitalized with foodborne botulism. Based on preliminary data, the source of their illnesses appears to be prepared food, particularly nacho cheese sauce, from the Valley Oak Food and Fuel gas station in Walnut Grove (Sacramento County). These patients became ill in late April and all had consumed prepared food, including nacho cheese sauce, from this gas station within five days of illness onset. The investigation is ongoing. On May 6, SCPH stopped the sale of prepared food at Valley Oak Food and Fuel gas station.

Actions Requested of Healthcare Professionals

1. Foodborne Botulism is considered a public health emergency
2. Immediately report any suspect case of botulism to Contra Costa Public Health 24/7 (925) 313-6740
3. Consider diagnosis of Botulism for patients who have been recently hospitalized for unexplained neurological illness who presented with a descending paralysis and who consumed prepared food, particularly nacho cheese sauce, from Valley Oak Food and Fuel gas station from April 1, 2017 through May 6, 2017. Symptoms of botulism generally begin within 18 to 36 hours of exposure but they can occur as early as 6 hours or as late as 10 days after exposure.
4. Treatment with antitoxin should be initiated immediately based on compatible clinical presentation and should not await laboratory confirmation. Laboratory testing is only available through a public health department laboratory and can take over a week to confirm.
5. Botulinum antitoxin may be obtained by contacting the Contra Costa Public Health Communicable Disease Program at: (925) 313-6740



BACKGROUND:

Foodborne botulism is a rare but potentially fatal illness caused by a toxin produced by *Clostridium botulinum*. Symptoms usually begin with bilateral cranial nerve signs and symptoms including blurred vision, diplopia (double vision), ptosis (drooping eyelids), dysphagia (trouble swallowing), dysarthria (difficulty speaking), impaired gag reflex, and facial weakness. Progression classically presents as a bilateral and symmetric descending extremity muscle weakness. Fever is usually absent, and patients usually remain alert and responsive with no sensory deficits. Respiratory muscles may become involved with resultant respiratory failure and death, unless prompt recognition and treatment is initiated. Symptoms generally begin 18 to 36 hours after eating a contaminated food or drink, but they can occur as early as 6 hours or as late as 10 days after exposure.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

The Contra Costa Public Health, Communicable Disease Programs can be reached at: 925-313-6740 (phone) or 925-313-6465 (fax).

MORE RESOURCES

More information may be found at www.cdc.gov.

