

Community Health Epidemiology & Disease Control 101 Grove Street, Room 408 San Francisco, CA 94102

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## **HEALTH ALERT**

**NOVEMBER 9. 2004** 

#### CASES of WOUND BOTULISM in INJECTION DRUG USERS

One confirmed case and multiple suspect cases of wound botulism have been recognized in injection drug users in the Bay Area including one in San Francisco. Additional cases may occur. Because this condition is quickly progressive and life threatening, we are alerting clinicians and requesting they follow these recommendations.

This Health Alert is posted on the SFDPH website (www.sfdph.org/HealthInfo/WoundBotulism.htm).

#### **ACTIONS REQUESTED OF ALL CLINICIANS:**

- 1. **Be alert** for cases of wound botulism especially in injection drug users.
- 2. Report suspect cases to the Communicable Disease Control Unit (CDCU) at 415-554-2830. CDCU staff can facilitate release of antitoxin.
- 3. Consider Neurology and Infectious Disease consultation.
- 4. Conduct a thorough search for a wound, and consider Surgical consultation.
- 5. Obtain **serum for toxin assays** (in serum separator tubes).
- 6. Warn patients who inject drugs about wound botulism and inform them of symptoms, the need to seek medical care promptly and prevention methods (see below and the appended flyers).
- 7. Because of a higher risk of tetanus in injection drug users, provide tetanus vaccine every 5 years.

### **Description of wound botulism:**

Wound botulism is caused by an infection with Clostridium botulinum, a toxin-producing-bacteria. Since 1988 it has been predominantly associated with subcutaneous or intramuscular black tar heroin use. Wound botulism usually begins with bilateral cranial nerve signs and symptoms including blurred vision, diplopia, ptosis, dysphagia, dysarthria, impaired gag reflex and facial weakness. It then proceeds to generalized weakness and dyspnea. On close inspection an abscess containing the bacteria may be found at a site of injection.

#### **Treatment:**

Supportive care is the mainstay of treatment. Wounds should receive debridement. Antitoxin therapy should be provided as early as possible to reduce the incidence of respiratory failure; ideally administer antitoxin within 12 hours of presentation and prior to wound debridement. Antibiotics are recommended (e.g., penicillin or metronidazole) although aminoglycosides and tetracyclines are generally contraindicated.

**Instructions for injection drug users**: (A flyer for patients is appended and posted on the SFDPH website.)

- A. Stop or reduce injecting.
- B. Do not use black tar heroin. It isn't possible to prevent wound botulism by cooking or cleaning the dope.
- C. If they must continue injecting: Use new sterile syringes with each injection.
- D. If they must reuse: Clean syringes with bleach.
- E. Before injecting: Thoroughly clean the injection site with soap and hot water or with alcohol swabs.
- F. Do not share needles, syringes, cookers, cottons, mixing or rinse water with anybody.
- G. If they experience symptoms of wound botulism: Go Immediately To The Nearest Emergency Room.

#### **Categories of urgency levels**

**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



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**November 9, 2004** 

# **Warning!!!**Heroin Users

There is a harmful germ that can kill users of

# Heroin

If you <u>inject</u> heroin in your veins, muscles or under your skin (skin popping), you can get a disease called:

## **WOUND BOTULISM**

## **SYMPTOMS OCCUR WITHIN 1-2 DAYS:**

- Increased Shortness of Breath
- Difficulty with Vision
- Difficulty with Breathing
- Difficulty with Swallowing and Talking

If you have any of these symptoms, GO IMMEDIATELY TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM OR TO SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL HOSPITAL ER, 1001 Potrero Avenue (415) 206-8111.

You Cannot Kill it by Cooking the Dope.

Don't Shoot Alone.

DON'T Share Needles, Syringes, Water, Filters, or Cookers.

Always clean injection sites with soap & water or with alcohol swabs.

For More Information visit our website: <a href="https://www.sfdph.org/HealthInfo/WoundBotulism/htm">www.sfdph.org/HealthInfo/WoundBotulism/htm</a>



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### 9 de Novembre de 2004

# **ALERTA!!!**Para Personas Que Usan Heroína

Hay un germen dañino que puede matar a las personas que usan **Heroína** 

Si te <u>inyectas</u> heroína a las venas, músculo o debajo de la piel puedes agarrar la enfermedad que se llama

## "Botulismo" en las Heridas

## Los síntomas suceden dentro de 1 a 2 días:

- Falta de aire al respirar
- Dificultad para ver
- Dificultad para respirar
- Dificultad en tragar ó hablar

Si tienes algunos de estos síntomas, VE INMEDIATAMENTE A LA SALA DE EMERGENCIA MAS CERCANA O VE A LA SALA DE EMERGENCIA DEL HOSPITAL GENERAL DE SAN FRANCISCO, 1001 Potrero Avenue (415) 206-8111.

Este Germen No se Muere al Prepararse la Heroína.

No te Inyectes Cuando Estés Solo ó Sola.

NO Compartas Agujas, Jeringas, Agua, Filtro ó Herramienta Para Preparar la Heroína.

Siempre limpia con jabón y agua o con alcohol el sitio de inyección.

Para más información visite nuestro sitio de web: www.sfdph.org/HealthInfo/WoundBotulism/htm.