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Communicable Disease Control & Prevention

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Tel (415) 554-2830 Fax (415) 554-2848

Hospital Laboratory Instructions-Adult Botulism Specimen Submission

- **Notify:** San Francisco Department of Public Health Laboratory at (415) 554-2800 on each case of botulism for which specimens will be collected.

NOTE: The patient's physician must have discussed the case and received approval for submission of specimens from the San Francisco Department of Public Health, Communicable Disease Control Unit (415) 554-2830. The patient's physician will then be contacted by the State's Communicable Disease Control Duty Officer of the Day for approval PRIOR to submission of specimens.

- **Test Criteria:** Botulism toxin detection is not a rapid or STAT test. It is an "in-vivo reference test". The time to a positive result varies with the specimen and the toxin concentration. Sera containing anticholinesterase drugs (i.e. Mestinon/Timespan), drugs from the Tensilon test, or Ambenonium chloride require additional procedures or analytical time; if known, these substances should be reported on the lab submission slip.
 - **Required:** Pre-antitoxin Serum
 - Draw 30 ml whole blood from a free flowing site. Hemolyzed or low volume sera will not be tested.
 - Label with patient's name, "pre-antitoxin" serum, date and time collected. Refrigerate.
 - Centrifuge and transfer the serum (about 15 ml) to a separate tube. Label and refrigerate.
 - **Other:** only when recommended by the public health epidemiologist. Please label all specimens with patient's name, date and time collected.
 - 25 gm feces unpreserved or 25 ml of a sterile water enema. Refrigerate.
 - 25 ml gastric aspirate, if taken within 72 hours of symptom onset. Refrigerate.
- **Storage:** **Keep specimens refrigerated. Do not expose to heat. Do not freeze.**
- **Specimen Submission Form:** Labs should complete the SFDPH Laboratory Specimen Submission Form available at <http://www.sfdcp.org/index.cfm?id=16> and submit with specimen to SFDPH.
- **Transport:** Samples should be maintained at 4-10 C during transit. Do not pack with dry ice or allow cold packs to directly contact the samples. Ship or courier the specimens to the SFPHL along with appropriate paperwork. Allow 2-4 days transit time before testing is begun at the State reference laboratory. Please ship specimens for arrival **Monday through Friday 8 am through 4 pm.**
- **Results:** Positive results are reported by the Communicable Disease Control Unit to the physician who ordered the test. Verbal and written reports from SFDPH PH Lab are sent to the hospital lab. After testing begins, typical cases may be confirmed within 4 days; others may take up to 15 days.

Send Specimens to:
San Francisco Public Health Laboratory
101 Grove St, Room 412
San Francisco, CA 94102
Phone: (415) 554-2800
Fax: (415) 431-0615