

CHP investigates two probable cases of botulism

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (June 4) is investigating two probable cases of botulism involving patients who received injections of botulinum toxin on the Mainland. The CHP reminded the public that they should only receive botulinum toxin injections as prescribed and performed by registered doctors after clinical assessment.

The first case involves a 49-year-old female patient. She presented with generalised weakness, blurred vision and difficulty in breathing since May 24. She attended a hospital in Shenzhen on May 26 and was admitted on the same day. She returned to Hong Kong and attended North District Hospital on May 28 due to persistent symptoms. She is hospitalised in the intensive care unit and is in critical condition.

The second case involves a 50-year-old female patient. She presented with generalised weakness, bilateral ptosis and swallowing difficulty since May 27. She was admitted to United Christian Hospital on June 3 and is now in stable condition.

Both patients were clinically suspected to have botulism caused by botulinum toxin injection.

The preliminary investigation revealed that the two patients are friends. They claimed to have received injections of botulinum toxin for cosmetic purposes in private premises in Shenzhen around mid-May. They believed that the person who performed the injections was not a healthcare professional. Epidemiological investigations are still ongoing.

In Hong Kong, botulinum toxin injections should only be performed by a locally registered doctor. Customers should verify the doctor's full name against the [list of registered doctors](#) of the Medical Council of Hong Kong as well as their professional qualifications and relevant experience. When receiving injections outside Hong Kong, pay special attention to ensure the provider is qualified or registered with relevant jurisdictions for practice. In case of injections offered from suspicious sources, refrain from receiving them. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice from eligible medical professionals as soon as possible.

Due to the weakening of the associated muscles and the fact that botulinum toxin may spread and affect other areas beyond the injection site, affected patients may have drooping eyelids, double or blurred vision, problems with chewing, hoarseness, or even difficulties in swallowing, speaking or breathing, which may happen hours, days or weeks after the injection.

The CHP urged the public to observe the following health advice before

receiving botulinum toxin injections:

- Injections in Hong Kong should only be performed by locally registered doctors;
- Understand the procedure, potential risks and possible complications before receiving injections. Consult a doctor for an informed decision;
- Do not receive injections from suspicious sources;
- Do not receive an injection in the case of a history of allergy to botulinum toxin, or if there is an infection or inflammation on the injection site;
- Request the full name of the doctor in writing if referred by a beauty service provider for the procedure, as well as the professional qualifications and relevant experience; and
- If symptoms develop after injections, such as muscle weakness or feeling unwell, seek medical attention immediately.

The public may visit the DH's webpage on the [differentiation between medical procedures and beauty services](#), the [Drug Database](#) of the Drug Office and the CHP's [botulism page](#) for more information.â€¢