

One of biggest shipments of anti-botulism serums in last two years to be delivered to regions

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A shipment of 204 vials of Canadian-produced anti-botulism serum, procured under Ukraine's state budget, is being delivered to the country's regions, according to a signed distribution order published on the website of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine.

"Previously, Ukraine did not have a special programme for the centralized procurement of serums against botulism," said Olha Stefanyshyna, Ukraine's deputy health minister. "However, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (now) provides such antitoxins under the state budget. With its procurement through international organizations, we've managed

to attract world-renowned producers, and for the first time, a high-quality serum manufactured in Canada was registered. Serum will be available free of charge for anyone with a case of botulism who needs it.”

The shipment of serums against botulism was procured by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Ukraine. The Canadian-produced botulism antitoxin is a high-quality product that is authorized by countries with strict regulatory standards for medicines – the Food and Drugs Administration (United States) and Health Canada (Canada). The shelf life of the medicines on the moment of delivery is not less than two years.

“UNDP is partnering with the Ministry of Health of Ukraine to support the implementation of health reform and strengthen national medicine procurement capacity, systems and process so that universal medicine coverage is ensured, and no one is left behind,” said Dafina Gercheva, UNDP resident representative to Ukraine. “Our joint efforts bring to Ukraine high-quality medicines that meet modern international standards and criteria.”

The procured medicine is a heptavalent antitoxin, which means it can be used to treat infections by seven genotypes of botulinum toxin (types A, B, C, D, E, F, G), unlike its analogues, which can usually only treat one (type A) or three genotypes (types A, B, E).

The requirements for each region were determined on a statistical data basis, by calculating the average number of cases of the disease over the last ten years. This will ensure all patients can be provided with the necessary medicines.

According to operational reports, 44 cases of botulism were registered in Ukraine since the beginning of the year, resulting in the illness of 50 people. Most of the botulism cases over the period were recorded in Chernihiv, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, and Kyiv city.

Botulism is a food poisoning caused by the consumption of products in which botulotoxin has accumulated.

The first symptoms of disease typically occur within 7-24 hours after contaminated food is consumed. Among them: disturbance of close vision, diplopia, a severe dry mouth, difficulty in swallowing, high fatigue, muscle weakness, dizziness, short-term signs of digestive system damage (nausea, vomiting, weak defecation), and then - the intestinal paresis stage (bloating, coprostasis), lesion of the neck and extremities muscles.

[Learn more](#) about botulism and how to protect yourself from the disease.