

BOTULISM, FOODBORNE

What is foodborne botulism?

Foodborne botulism is a food poisoning caused by a toxin produced by the bacteria, *Clostridium botulinum*. The bacteria grow best in food at room temperatures (70 - 110°F).

Who gets foodborne botulism?

Foodborne botulism occurs after eating food containing the toxin that is formed by the bacterium, *C. botulinum*, in food. This toxin does not give a bad odor or taste to food. The disease most often develops after consuming improperly processed home-canned foods or home-preserved meats.

How is foodborne botulism spread?

Person to person spread does not occur. A person must eat contaminated food that has not been properly cooked or reheated after the toxin has been produced by the bacteria.

What are the symptoms of foodborne botulism?

Foodborne botulism produces symptoms that affect the nervous system. The symptoms of foodborne botulism include blurred or double vision, general weakness, poor reflexes, difficulty swallowing, dry mouth, drooping of the upper eyelids, dilated pupils, and constipation and sometimes death.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms of foodborne botulism usually appear 12-36 hours after eating contaminated food. In rare cases, symptoms may not develop for several days.

What is the treatment for foodborne botulism?

Hospital care is necessary. Antitoxin is given in certain cases of foodborne botulism.

What happens if foodborne botulism is not treated?

Untreated botulism may result in death.

How can foodborne botulism be prevented?

All canned and preserved foods must be properly processed and prepared. Home-canned products should be heated to 241°F(116°C) using a pressure cooker to kill spores of *Clostridium botulinum*. Specific guidelines for home-canning are available from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Home-canned foods should be boiled for 10 minutes before eating; this will destroy the botulism toxin. Reheated foods should be heated to 140°F. Frozen foods should be thawed in the refrigerator, rather than at room temperature. Bulging containers should not be opened and foods with off-odors should not be eaten or even tasted. Commercial cans with bulging lids should be returned unopened to the vendor.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal doctor
- Your local health department, listed in your telephone directory
- The Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191

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