



# South Central Public Health District

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Twin Falls 737-5900 \* Burley 678-8221 \* Gooding 934-4477 \* Bellevue 788-4335 \* Jerome 324-8838 \* Rupert 436-7185

---

## **BOTULISM**

(foodborne botulism and infant botulism)

### **What is botulism?**

Botulism is a food poisoning caused by a toxin produced by bacteria known as *Clostridium botulinum*.

### **Who gets botulism?**

Foodborne botulism is due to eating the toxin. It often involves improperly processed home canned foods. Infant botulism has been associated with eating honey that contains the bacterial spores. Light and dark corn syrups have also been reported to contain the spores, although cases of infant botulism have not been linked to corn syrup.

### **How is botulism spread?**

You cannot get botulism from another person. A person must eat contaminated food that has not been properly cooked or reheated. With infant botulism, an infant must eat bacterial spores and then the bacteria produce the toxin in the gastrointestinal tract.

### **What are the symptoms of botulism?**

Foodborne and infant botulism produce symptoms that affect the nervous system. The symptoms of food borne botulism include blurred or double vision, dry mouth, and muscle paralysis that may affect breathing. About 15% of persons with food borne botulism die. Infant botulism has a wide range of symptoms including constipation, listlessness, weakness, difficulty breathing, poor feeding and poor reflexes. About 2% of the cases of infant botulism die.

### **How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms of foodborne botulism usually appear 12 to 36 hours after eating the food that contains the toxin. It is possible for symptoms to take several days to develop. The incubation period for infant botulism is unknown.

### **What is the treatment for botulism?**

Hospital care is necessary. Persons with botulism may need help with breathing. Antitoxin is given in certain cases of foodborne botulism, but is not used in cases of infant botulism.

### **How can botulism be prevented?**

Honey and corn syrup should not be fed to infants less than 12 months of age. All canned and preserved foods should be properly processed and prepared. Bulging containers should not be opened and goods with off-odors should not be eaten or even tasted. Commercial cans with bulging lids should be returned unopened to the place of purchase. Home canned vegetables should be boiled, with stirring, for at least 3 minutes before eating.