



BOTULISM FACT SHEET

WHAT IS BOTULISM?

Foodborne botulism can happen by eating foods that have been contaminated with the botulinum toxin. Wound botulism can happen if the spores of the bacteria get into a wound and make a toxin. Infant botulism can happen if the spores of the bacteria get into an infant's intestines. In foodborne botulism, symptoms generally begin 18 to 36 hours after eating a contaminated food. However, symptoms can begin as soon as 6 hours after or up to 10 days later. For wound botulism, symptoms may begin anywhere from 4 to 14 days after injury.

HOW DO YOU GET BOTULISM?

Common sources of foodborne botulism are homemade foods that have been improperly canned, preserved, or fermented. Foods with low acid content (such as asparagus, green beans, beets, corn, and potatoes) are the most common sources of home-canning related botulism cases. People who inject drugs have a greater chance of getting wound botulism.

SYMPTOMS

Double vision, blurred vision, drooping eyelids, slurred speech, difficulty swallowing, dry mouth, a thick feeling tongue, and muscle weakness. Infants with botulism appear lethargic, feed poorly, are constipated, have a weak cry, and have poor muscle tone.

TREATMENT

Fluids and electrolyte replacement can be used to prevent or treat dehydration. Antibiotics are not recommended. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

PREVENTION

Cook and keep food at the correct temperature. Food should be cooked to a safe internal temperature, and then kept at 140°F (60° C) or warmer. Meat dishes should be served hot, within 2 hours after cooking. Refrigerate leftovers and reheat them properly. Leftover foods should be refrigerated at 40°F or colder as soon as possible and within 2 hours of preparation. When in doubt, throw it out. Foods that have dangerous bacteria in them may not taste, smell or look different. Any food that has been left out for too long may be dangerous to eat, even if it looks acceptable.

DPHD EFFORTS

Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the Delaware Public Health District (DPHD). The DPHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education.