



HOW TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF CONTRACTING FOODBORNE BOTULISM



Cases of botulism have been linked with improper preparation and handling of foods in commercial food processing facilities and at home. For example, one botulism incident was caused by leaving cooked potatoes unrefrigerated overnight and then using the potatoes to make potato salad. You can learn more about botulism from our flyer “What is Foodborne Botulism?”

You can take precautions to minimize your risk of contracting foodborne botulism:

- If you are a home canner, please review our flyer “Home Canning” for safety tips.
- Heat all home-canned meat and vegetable foods for at least 15 minutes at 212°F before each serving. *This simple precaution could virtually eliminate deaths caused by botulism associated with home-canned food items.*
- Never buy low-acid food in cans that are swollen, leaking, or dented. If you find you have purchased a swollen can, you should return it to the store and report the incident to your local environmental health department.
- Never eat or taste questionable food. *Clostridium botulinum* toxins may not change the appearance or taste of food. Even small amounts of food contaminated by *C. botulinum* toxins can result in severe illness or death. **Remember - If in doubt, throw it out.**
- Immediately destroy any food that has an unusual odor or discoloration. Make sure that the discarded food cannot be eaten by children, pets, or other animals by denaturing it and securing the container in a sealed garbage bag and depositing in the trash.

If you have a complaint about a commercially processed food, please contact the California Department of Public Health, Food and Drug Branch at FDBFood@cdph.ca.gov