



## 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

If you or someone you know has symptoms of botulism, see your doctor or go to the emergency room immediately. Doctors treat botulism with a drug called an antitoxin. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

### PREVENTION

Following safe home canning instructions as recommended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning

Following all instructions for washing, cleaning, and sterilizing items used in canning

Use pressure canners for low-acid foods like potatoes, most other vegetables, and meats

Refrigerate homemade oils infused with garlic or herbs and throw away any unused oils after 4 days.

Keep potatoes that have been baked while wrapped in aluminum foil hot (at temperatures above 140°F) until they are served, or refrigerate them with the foil loosened.

### DGHD EFFORTS

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