

BOTULISM CAN THRIVE IN IMPROPERLY CANNED FOOD

When a foodborne illness makes people sick, the media quickly spread the word. This rapid communication helps protect public health by making the food service industry, purveyors and consumers aware of the food to recall or avoid.

The news media recently issued public warnings and expanded product recalls for Hot Dog Chili Sauce and meat products that

were canned by Castleberry™. The identified foodborne illness was botulism, a rare but serious paralytic illness caused by a nerve toxin produced by the bacterium, *Clostridium botulinum*.

As of August 24, 2007, eight cases of botulism were reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The cases involved individuals becoming sick after eating hot dog chili sauce products



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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR HEALTH INSPECTION



As a food service manager, you should be prepared for an inspection every day that you are open. Your establishment's policies and procedures that cover hiring staff, ordering supplies, and

managing the everyday processes of running a food service operation should have the ultimate goal of serving safe food.

When the inspector arrives, treat him/her with respect. Ask for the inspector's credentials. Never refuse an inspection. You are not expected to offer food and drink to the inspector. Make sure that your staff know that they are also expected to cooperate with the inspection process.

Make time to accompany the

inspector during the visit and ask questions about what is going on. The inspector will be filling out the inspection report and will go over the report with you once the inspection is complete. You must sign the report. You will be given a copy and another copy will be on file at the state or local office.

Ask the inspector to explain any violations that were found to the appropriate staff. You can ask the inspector for recommendations

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INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Are you looking for new food safety and sanitation information and training resources? The Risky

Business Resource Box provides you with a quick and easy way to stay current with research, recalls,

and resources. Check out the information on page 3.

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canned by Castleberry's Food Company. Although investigation of the contamination is still underway, under-processing of the canned foods is a possible cause. As a result, Castleberry has shut down a production line and recalled the products.

Symptoms of botulism

The botulinum toxin is highly toxic and can cause life-threatening illness and death. Symptoms of foodborne botulism usually appear 18 to 36 hours after eating a contaminated food, but they can begin as early as six hours or as late as 10 days.

Classic symptoms include double vision, blurred vision, drooping eyelids, slurred speech, difficulty swallowing, dry mouth, and muscle weakness. If untreated, muscle weakness caused by the botulinum toxin can lead to paralysis of the arms, legs, trunk and respiratory muscles.

Paralysis of respiratory muscles can cause a person to stop breathing and die, unless the victim receives breathing assistance through mechanical ventilation.

Growth of botulism

Clostridium botulinum is commonly found in soil. The bacteria form spores that survive in a dormant state until exposed to conditions that can support their growth. *Clostridium botulinum* grows best in low-oxygen, low-acid environments and at temperatures between 40°F and 120°F.

When food is canned, oxygen is removed from the container and the contents are heated to a temperature high enough to destroy the spores formed by the botulism bacteria. Commercially canned foods or home-canned foods that haven't been processed correctly provide a perfect environment for botulism to grow. If canned foods are under-

processed and the spores survive, the spores will have the low-oxygen, low-acid environment they need to grow, and eventually produce the deadly toxin.

In 2005, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 145 cases of botulism compared to approximately 36,000 cases of salmonellosis. Most cases of botulism are caused by improperly prepared home-canned foods. Commercially canned foods have a strong safety record.

For more information on botulism: US Food and Drug Administration's Bad Bug Book

<http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~mow/intro.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/botulism/>

Information on the Castleberry product recall:

<http://www.cdc.gov/botulism/botulism.htm>

Prevention of Foodborne Illness from Botulism

- Discard all cans or jars of food with bulging or swollen ends, or bulging lids.
- Don't eat food from severely dented cans.
- Don't taste food from swollen containers, even if the food doesn't look or smell spoiled.
- Discard food that is foamy, moldy, has a bad odor or an off color.
- Don't serve foods that have been home canned. Home canned foods are an unapproved food source.
- When in doubt, throw it out. Follow CDC instructions www.cdc.gov/botulism/botulism_faq.htm for safe disposal of contaminated food.



GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR HEALTH INSPECTION *Continued from page 1*

for improving the situation.

If you are cited for violations, make sure that the inspector knows that you are willing to make any necessary changes. If you disagree with the findings, you can appeal at a later time, but during the

inspection is not a time to be confrontational.

Remember the ultimate goal of the inspection: serving safe food to your customers. Following safe food practices can help you improve the quality of the

food you serve your customers, prevent having to discard food that was not stored properly and prevent you from being responsible for a foodborne illness incident that can jeopardize your reputation and business.

Risky Business Resource Box

Food Safety Training

UNH Cooperative Extension's **SAFE** program is a fast-paced, two-hour food safety and sanitation update for food workers. To schedule a **SAFE** program in your foodservice facility, contact your county UNH Cooperative Extension Office through our website: <http://extension.unh.edu/Counties/Counties.htm>

Food Recalls

Food recalls are front-page news this fall. Bookmark this web page on the [Foodsafety.gov](http://foodsafety.gov) website as a way to quickly access food recalls issued by all the federal food safety agencies. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/fsgnews.html>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Retail Food Protection

This gateway page provides access to the 2005 Food Code, upcoming satellite broadcasts and information on nine FDA program categories such as HACCP & Managerial Control of Risk Factors and Foodborne Illness, Food Defense & Disaster/Emergency Response. <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~ear/retail.html>

Be Food Safe

Designed by the Partnership for Food Safety Education, the Be Food Safe campaign provides preventive educational messages and materials for retailers, suppliers, and consumers. Check out how you can use their food safety education materials in your food service operation. <http://www.befoodsafe.org>

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