

Clostridium Botulinum

Affecting the nervous system, Clostridium botulinum food poisoning can cause severe illness.

WHAT IS IT?

Clostridium botulinum is a type of bacteria common in soil, rotting vegetables and marine mud. It produces a very poisonous toxin called botulin. Spores formed by Clostridium botulinum can survive hours of boiling and can grow in canned and vacuum packed foods.

FOOD POISONING

Eating food contaminated with the botulin toxin causes Clostridium botulinum food poisoning. The botulin toxin affects the nervous system. Only a small amount of the toxin is needed to cause illness.

THE SYMPTOMS

The initial symptoms of Clostridium botulinum food poisoning are blurred or double vision, dry mouth, fatigue, headache and dizziness. These symptoms are followed by nerve impairment, weakness or paralysis. Vomiting, constipation or diarrhoea may also occur.

Symptoms appear within 12 to 36 hours of eating the contaminated food, however in some cases it takes several days. If you have the symptoms of Clostridium botulinum food poisoning report them to your doctor immediately. Left untreated, it can cause death. Recovery may take months.

HOW TO AVOID FOOD POISONING

- Avoid home preservation of meat, poultry, game and fish except by freezing.
- Ensure that those practicing canning or other food preservation techniques at home are aware of the role of time control, pressure, adequate storage, the temperature required to kill spores and the effectiveness of boiling and stirring.
- The bacteria are unable to grow below pH 4.5 or in the presence of nitrates. For this reason sodium nitrate is commonly added to high pH canned items, such as meats.
- Avoid eating raw and fermented fish.
- Inspect canned products and contents carefully before opening or eating.
- Never open bulging containers. This may be a sign that the contents contain Clostridium botulinum. Commercial cans with bulging lids should be returned unopened to the place of purchase.

SEE ALSO

- Food poisoning - General Information
- Food poisoning - Campylobacter
- Food poisoning - Bacillus cereus
- Food poisoning - Clostridium perfringens
- Food poisoning - Escherichia coli (E.coli)
- Food poisoning - Staphylococcus
- Food poisoning - Listeria monocytogenes
- Food poisoning - Salmonella

CONTACT DETAILS

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