FACT SHEET – *Botulism*

**BOTULISM SICKNESS IS CAUSED BY A POISON**

- The poison is made by a type of bacteria.
  - The bacteria live in the soil. It grows best where there is little or no air.
  - It forms spores that can live a long time.
  - People cannot smell or taste the poison.
- Adults can get botulism poisoning
  - by eating foods containing the poison, like improperly home-canned food
  - by getting the bacteria in a wound
- Babies can get poisoned from eating food with the spores.
  - The spores grow in the body and make the poison.
  - Babies less than a year old should not eat honey or other natural syrups.

**BOTULISM POISONING IS AN EMERGENCY**

- People can die from botulism poisoning.
- This usually happens because they cannot breathe.
- Some signs of botulism poisoning in **adults** are double vision or blurred vision, difficulty speaking or swallowing, and paralysis—being unable to move arms or legs.
- **Babies** with botulism have a weak cry and are limp, seem tired, don’t eat well, and are constipated.

 ONLY A DOCTOR CAN TEST TO BE SURE IF SOMEONE HAS BOTULISM
FACT SHEET – Botulism (continued)

BOTULISM CAN BE PREVENTED

• Handle food carefully.
  – Can foods at home safely.
  – Get information on safe canning from the county extension service or U.S. Department of Agriculture.
  – Don’t eat food from jars or cans if the container is bulging, the food is the wrong color, or the food tastes bad.
  – Refrigerate oils that have garlic or herbs.
  – Remove the foil from baked potatoes before putting them in the refrigerator.

• Take care of cuts and other wounds.
  – Clean all wounds.
  – See your doctor if an injury gets infected.

DON’T FEED HONEY TO BABIES UNDER A YEAR OLD