



BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION
Communicable Disease Control Division
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HEALTH ALERT: Foodborne Botulism Associated with Canned Chili

Summary: Four cases of botulism have been reported in persons from Texas and Indiana who reported eating Castleberry's brand Hot Dog Chili Sauce Original. The Castleberry Food Company has issued a recall of all food products manufactured at the same Augusta, GA plant. Although no cases of botulism have been identified in Boston, products subject to recall have been found in sites in the city. Health care providers should consider a diagnosis of botulism in persons with compatible symptoms, and immediately notify the Boston Public Health Commission at 617-534-5611.

BACKGROUND

As of July 21, 2007, four cases of botulism have been reported from Indiana (2 cases) and Texas (2 cases). Onset dates range from June 29 to July 9, 2007. All four persons were reported to have consumed Castleberry's brand Hot Dog Chili Sauce Original. Botulinum toxin was identified in leftover chili sauce from an unlabeled sealable bag collected from a patient's refrigerator. Due to possible contamination with botulinum toxin, federal health authorities are advising persons not to eat certain canned food products manufactured by Castleberry's Food Company. Castleberry has issued a voluntary recall of food products manufactured at the implicated production facility under various brand names, and an investigation is currently underway to verify that these products are not being sold, distributed or used in retail food facilities in Boston.

SYMPTOMS AND DIAGNOSIS

Illness follows ingestion of preformed botulinum toxin; botulism is not transmitted from person to person. Symptoms of botulism poisoning in humans can begin from 6 hours to 2 weeks (most commonly 12 – 36 hours) after eating food that contains the toxin. Signs and symptoms may include double vision, blurred vision, drooping eyelids, slurred speech, difficulty swallowing, and muscle weakness that progresses down the body. Disease can range from mild to rapidly progressive. Health care providers should consider a diagnosis of botulism poisoning in individuals who show these symptoms and who may have recently eaten one of the Castleberry's products currently under recall.

To confirm the diagnosis of botulism, serum, stool, and any leftover food products should be tested for the presence of botulinum toxin. Please contact the Boston Public Health Commission for information regarding testing and specimen collection.

PREVENTION & MORE INFORMATION

The FDA advises consumers who have any of these products or any foods made with these products to throw them away immediately. Additional information regarding the food recall and current investigation can be found at the links below:

<http://www.cdc.gov/botulism/botulism.htm> *CDC webpage regarding botulism and the current investigation*

http://www.castleberrys.com/news_productrecall.asp *List of foods subject to recall*

<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2007/NEW01670.html> *Additional information and advice for consumers*

REPORTING

Health care providers who suspect a case of botulism should contact the Boston Public Health Commission, Communicable Disease Control Division immediately, at 617-534-5611.