



County of Fresno DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Public Health Communication
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Fresno County Department of Public Health Investigating Suspected Botulism Cases

The Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH) is actively investigating a suspected multi-person outbreak of botulism, likely related to contaminated food consumed at a family event on June 21st in Caruthers and June 22nd in Clovis, California. The FCDPH is working closely with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify the specific food source for their illness.

Botulism is a rare but serious illness caused by a toxin produced by *Clostridium botulinum* and related bacteria, which can attack the body's nerves, leading to muscle paralysis-particularly of facial nerves, and in severe cases difficulty breathing and even death. People can get botulism by ingesting the toxin through improperly home-canned, preserved, or fermented foods, or through wounds infected with the bacteria. To avoid food-borne botulism, ensure that home-canning and preserving methods follow proper guidelines and that any items to be preserved are thoroughly cleaned of any soil prior to preparing. Botulism cannot be spread from person to person.

"Our local health department is working closely with area hospitals, state, and national health agencies on this outbreak. While the risk to the general population is low, we are actively tracing those who may have consumed the contaminated food to ensure they get timely monitoring and treatment," says Dr. Rais Vohra, Interim Health Officer for Fresno County. "This is also a good reminder for everyone to [maintain safe food handling](#) practices as we prepare for upcoming Independence Day festivities."

Symptoms of botulism usually begin with weakness and dizziness, followed by blurred vision, drooping eyelids, and difficulty speaking or swallowing. As the illness progresses, it can cause paralysis that starts in the upper body and moves down to the legs. It is important that anyone ill with symptoms of botulism visit a health care provider immediately to be assessed.

The FCDPH is collaborating with the CDPH to ensure that local hospitals are adequately supplied to treat botulism. If you or a family member attended the family event and present with botulism symptoms, call your health care provider or visit your local emergency department as soon as possible. For more information on botulism, visit: [Botulism \(ca.gov\)](https://www.botulism.ca.gov)

The FCDPH is continuing to monitor the situation in collaboration with the CDPH and partner health agencies and will update the media as new details become available.

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Promotion, preservation and protection of the community's health

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