



Use a pressure canner and follow a tested recipe to safely preserve beans

## 3 in Spokane sickened by botulism linked to home canned beans

In February 2009 a Spokane woman and two young children were sickened by foodborne botulism from improperly canned green beans from a home garden.

Media reports suggest that the victims were a nurse in her 30s and two children younger than 10. She remains on a ventilator and is recovering slowly. The children suffered milder symptoms. Early signs of foodborne botulism include weakness and vertigo, double vision and progressive difficulty in speaking and swallowing.

Difficult economic times and a focus on local foods has lead to increased interest in home food preservation in recent years. Further home preservation-linked botulism may arise due to increased consumption of food not processed using safe canning steps.



- Low acid foods (pH greater than 4.6) such as green beans and asparagus cannot be safely canned using a hot water bath, even if vinegar is used (unless a tested pickling recipe is followed).
- *Clostridium botulinum* spores are common in soil. The spores can be heat activated and turn into cells. The growing cells create a toxin leading to botulism in oxygen-free canned foods.
- A pint of green beans needs to be processed for 20 min at 11 psi if using a dial gauge (or 10 psi using a weighted gauge) pressure canner from sea level to 2000 ft. elevation.
- Required pressure will increase at higher altitudes; time will increase for larger containers (quarts).
- Consult the National Center for Home Food Preservation, <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/> for altitude adjustments and tested recipes.