



News Release

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BEWARE OF FOOD POISONING!

With summer at an end, many gardeners will begin home canning the fruits of their labor. In recent years, home canning has seen a resurgence, particularly among urban women 39 to 55 who may not have grown up canning at home. The recession has also spurred more people to consider canning the produce they grow.

While home food preservation can save on grocery bills, reduce carbon emission by decreasing the need to transport produce long distances and allow consumers to enjoy produce out of season, there are risks if basic safety precautions are not taken.

The Indiana Poison Center offers the following tips on safely preserving food:

- Be aware of the dangers of botulism. While summer 2010 has been filled with news about food recalls for *Salmonella*, experienced home canners are wary of *Clostridium botulinum*, the organism responsible for botulism and the second most common cause of food poisoning in the United States. Symptoms usually show up between 18 to 36 hours after the person has been exposed and include weakness, double vision and difficulty swallowing and speaking. Like all food poisoning, it's likely to be more dangerous for infants, the elderly, or people with weakened immune systems. Fortunately, botulism requires a very unusual and specific environment to thrive, so by following a few basic safety tips, you can reduce your risk.

- Seek out information on safe canning at www.homecanning.org , www.foodsafety.gov or the USDA's *Complete Guide to Home Canning, 2009* (http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications_usda.html). You can also contact your local Agricultural Extension for classes or local resources.
- Select produce carefully, and wash it thoroughly before canning.
- Home canning requires specialized equipment. Never use pots, pans and jars that are meant for other purposes.
- Use the most current guidelines. Recommendations for safe canning may have changed, especially if the cookbook you are using is old or handed down from family members.
- Don't assume that heat alone will eliminate the threat of botulism. **Make sure you're following canning directions exactly.**
- If you suspect you've been poisoned by contaminated food of any kind, call the Indiana Poison Center at 1 (800) 222-1222 to speak with a poison specialist any time, day or night. The specialist can help you determine if you are in immediate danger, or whether you can care for yourself at home. Some symptoms, such as fever or blood in the vomit or stool, indicate a medical emergency and should not be ignored.
- For further tips on safely storing and preparing food, call the USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1 (888) 674-6854.

If you suspect a poisoning in your family, don't wait for symptoms – call the **Indiana Poison Center** at **1-800-222-1222** *immediately*. Poison Center experts are standing by 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to help with poison emergencies. To learn more about poison prevention and

to receive a free magnet and phone stickers, call the Indiana Poison Center at **1-800-222-1222**, or visit the Center's website at: www.clarian.org/poisoncontrol.

The Indiana Poison Center is an independent, non-profit, agency providing coverage and services for the entire state of Indiana. It serves as both an emergency telephone service and an information resource center, with services accessible to the general public and health care professionals 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. The IPC is the designated Regional Poison Information Center for Indiana and is certified by the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It is a collaborative effort of the Indiana State Department of Health, Clarian Health, the Federal Health Resources Services Administration and health care providers throughout the state.