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**CONTACT:**

Fairfield Department of Health: Jennifer Valentine (740) 808-1297

Ohio Department of Health: Russ Kennedy (614) 644-8562

## **Potato Salad Made From Home-Canned Potatoes** **Likely Cause of Botulism Outbreak**

*Public Health Officials Urge Proper Home Canning Techniques*

(LANCASTER) — Based on laboratory tests and interviews with potluck attendees, public health officials have concluded that potato salad made with home-canned potatoes is the likely cause of a foodborne botulism outbreak following a church potluck in Lancaster on April 19.

Botulism is a rare but serious paralytic illness caused by a nerve toxin that is produced by certain kinds of bacteria.

As of today, there are 21 confirmed cases of botulism associated with this outbreak, including one death. There are 10 suspected cases in which the individuals are exhibiting symptoms consistent with botulism. Patients have been treated with a botulism antitoxin provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and 12 remain hospitalized.

“This is a difficult time for our community, and our thoughts and prayers are with the affected individuals and their families,” said Mark Aebi, M.D., Health Commissioner & Medical Director for Fairfield Department of Health. “I want to thank our staff for their dedication and hard work during this outbreak as well as the tremendous support we have received from ODH and the CDC. FMC’s rapid assessment and participation in this response has been invaluable as well.”

Mary DiOrio, M.D., Medical Director of the Ohio Department of Health, noted the local, state and federal collaboration in responding to the outbreak. The response involved public health including Fairfield Department of Health, Ohio Department of Health, and CDC, as well as central Ohio hospitals including Fairfield Medical Center.

“I want to thank my colleagues in these public health agencies and hospitals for the tremendous work that they have done to treat individuals who have been sickened, and to investigate and control the outbreak,” she said.

Foodborne botulism can be prevented. It is important to follow proper canning techniques to reduce contamination of foods, including using the right equipment for the food being canned.

(more)

Always use a pressure canner or cooker when canning vegetables, meat, poultry, and seafood.

Pressure canning kills the germ that causes botulism when foods are processed at the correct time and pressure in pressure canners or cookers. Do not use boiling water canners when canning vegetables, meat, poultry, and seafood, because they will not protect against botulism poisoning.

Make sure that food preservation information is always current with up-to-date, scientifically tested guidelines. Do not use outdated publications or cookbooks — even if they were handed down from trusted family cooks.

In-depth, step-by-step canning directions are available from:

- The National Center for Home Food Preservation, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Complete Guide to Home Canning ([nchfp.uga.edu](http://nchfp.uga.edu))
- The Ohio State University Extension Home Food Preservation ([fcs.osu.edu/food-safety](http://fcs.osu.edu/food-safety))

It is important to follow food safety guidelines when preparing and serving foods at large gatherings and community events to reduce risk of all types of foodborne illness, such as salmonella and norovirus. Follow the simple steps of Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill. For more information about preparing and serving food safely at community events and large gatherings, go to [FoodSafety.gov](http://FoodSafety.gov).

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