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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

When in doubt, throw it out!

Health Officials warn improper canning methods can lead to foodborne illness

SOUTH CENTRAL IDAHO - Summer is winding down and with it local vegetable and fruit crops are ripening. As residents collect their harvests, the South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) reminds everyone to follow tested canning and food preservation guidelines to avoid getting sick.

“Even recipes and methods that have been used for years should be checked to make sure they meet FDA guidelines,” said Jarryd Samples, SCPHD Environmental Health Specialist. “An extremely serious form of food poisoning called botulism can grow in canned food and cause paralysis or, in some cases, death.”

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends:

- Choosing the right canner. If you use a pressure cooker make sure it is designed specifically for canning. Check the size because smaller canners can lead to undercooking.
- Follow the latest canning instructions and up-to-date recipes. Make sure to allow at least ¼ inch of headspace for jams and jellies, more for fruits and pickles.
- **When in doubt, throw it out.** If the container is leaking, if it looks damaged, or if the food ends up discolored or moldy, throw it away. **It is not worth getting sick.**
- If a family member shows any symptoms of botulism (slurred speech, double vision, difficulty swallowing, drooping eyelids, etc) see your doctor or go to the emergency room immediately. Botulism can be especially dangerous in young children, elderly, and immunocompromised people.

“It’s essential to follow up-to-date and research-tested recipes. The size of your canner, the acid level of your fruit, and even your altitude- they can all adjust the time you need in the processor,” Samples said. “Taking a little bit of extra time to prepare and research safe methods can protect you and your family from getting sick.

For more information about safe canning from the USDA:

https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html

From the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/botulism/consumer.html?fbclid=IwAR1emBitSbZka9ZnXhJOjKMX-ApSFCbNI96PW-D2YIya5HwlimVwLaRiLDw>

For other health concerns, please visit phd5.idaho.gov or call (208) 737-5900.