



# News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 22, 2017

PH17-047

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## **CDPH Testing Confirms Botulism Linked to Nacho Cheese Sauce Sold at Sacramento County Gas Station**

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) tested and confirmed that nacho cheese sauce that was sold at a gas station in Sacramento County has tested positive for the toxin that causes botulism. The toxin found in the cheese sauce is the same type identified in patients for whom CDPH has results.

CDPH has received reports of 10 cases of botulism linked to this outbreak, and has learned that one patient has died. The nacho cheese sauce was removed from sale on May 5. CDPH believes there is no continuing risk to the public.

“While there are still unanswered questions about this outbreak, these tragic illnesses are important reminders to be vigilant about food safety,” said CDPH Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith. “As we head into the summer barbecue season, both indoor and outdoor chefs need to be on guard against all foodborne illnesses.”

Botulism cases are reported to CDPH so that appropriate action can be taken to protect public health. For botulism and other foodborne diseases, CDPH and local public health departments receive case reports, conduct investigations to determine possible sources of exposure, test laboratory specimens to identify and link foodborne illnesses, take action to ensure food items that pose a risk to public health are no longer available, provide information to the public about how to prevent disease, and publish data about overall disease trends and risks.

For foodborne diseases, CDPH does not track patient conditions or outcomes. To protect patient privacy, CDPH is not sharing information about the patients affected in this botulism outbreak, their conditions or the four counties that have reported cases.

CDPH and local health departments have notified health care providers to be aware of the symptoms of botulism, including:

- Double or blurred vision
- Drooping eyelids
- Slurred speech
- Difficulty swallowing
- Dry mouth
- Muscle weakness

People experiencing these symptoms should contact their health care provider immediately.

Foodborne botulism is a rare but serious paralytic illness caused by a nerve toxin produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. Botulism can be treated with antitoxin and supportive care, often in an intensive care unit. Botulism is fatal in about 5 percent of cases. The toxin that causes botulism can be found in foods that are not properly processed or stored. It is odorless and colorless, so it is not possible to tell if a product is contaminated just by looking at it.

In the kitchen or at your backyard grill, simple steps can prevent many types of foodborne illnesses, including:

- Cook - Make sure foods are cooked to the right temperature.
- Clean - Wash hands and surfaces often.
- Chill - Refrigerate foods properly.
- Separate - Separate raw meats from other foods.

Consumers can find more [food-safety information](#) on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website. [Botulism information and data](#) can be found on the CDPH website and [the CDC website](#).

[www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)