

October 15, 1976

Botulism Risk

(1:00)

A current home canning fad in which no water is added to jars of low-acid vegetables poses a real botulism food poisoning risk. Low acid vegetables are all those except tomatoes.

The dangerous technique involves packing the raw vegetables into jars, omitting the water that is normally added at that point and processing the vegetables in the pressure canner the recommended length of time. Home canners may be attracted to this method because they think it will produce a product similar to low liquid commercially canned vegetables.

Tests conducted with carrots canned by this home canning method at the University of Minnesota indicate that the vegetables received only one-third of the minimum heat treatment considered necessary to destroy spores of the botulism-producing bacteria. The safe, commercial methods used for low-liquid canning cannot be duplicated in home kitchens. Extension Nutritionist Isabel Wolf says water is essential in home pressure canning because it makes possible faster transfer of heat within the canning jars. Without hot water bringing the vegetables to the target temperature, heat treatment is slow and inadequate for spore destruction.

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