



Botulism from Mishandled Frozen Chili Sold at a Salvage Store Dallas—Fort Worth, Texas. The onset of symptoms occurred during the period August 25

September 1st 2001. Fifteen of those with botulism had eaten at a church supper. An additionalth through case of botulism occurred in a 17 year old who was not part of the church supper group. The investigation concluded that chili purchased at a salvage store was the source of the botulinum toxin. There were no deaths.

Who Got Sick? Of 40 people who attended the church supper, there were 15 cases of botulism (40% of those attending). Nine of the patients (60% of the cases) had botulinum toxin detected

have passed the expiration date.) It was later determined that the salvage store held the frozen chili in a display bin at room temperature. Prior to the supper, the church member heated the chili in a pot and removed the pot from the stove as soon as the chili began to boil. She drove 5 min to the church kitchen, where she placed the pot on a burner set to low heat.

Chili consumed by 17-year-old patient. One day before the onset of his symptoms, the 17 year old ate frozen chili, which he had heated but not boiled. The patient reported to his mother that the chili appeared to be spoiled, with a fungus like appearance in one section of the container. He proceeded to eat the chili despite the indication of spoilage and his mother's advice not to eat it. The chili had been purchased by his mother at the Fort Worth salvage store 1 day before the church member purchased chili at the same store.

Salvage store handling of chili. Investigators noted that the salvage kept some foods requiring refrigeration at room temperature on Saturdays before returning them to the freezer if they did not sell. Such foods could have undergone many cycles of thawing and freezing. On the basis of the gross mishandling of other refrigerated products and the strong epidemiologic link, they conclude that storage of the chili at inappropriate temperatures in the salvage store allowed *C. botulinum* spores to grow and produce of botulinum toxin.

The investigators noted that this was the first outbreak linked to food sold at a salvage store. *C. botulinum* spores are very common in the environment and may have been present in the frozen chili during production at the manufacturing plant. If frozen chili is kept frozen until it is heated for serving, the presence of *C. botulinum* spores is not a problem. (PÝÌ D• 8PÔn| ß Ü7 Ð 0