Home canning is an excellent way to preserve garden produce and share it with family and friends. But it can be risky – or even deadly – if not done correctly and safely.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) home-canned foods are a common source of botulism in the United States. From 1996-2008, foods prepared in homes accounted for 48 of 116 foodborne botulism outbreaks. Eighteen of those were linked to home-canned vegetables.

Botulism is a rare but potentially deadly illness caused by a poison most commonly produced by a germ called Clostridium botulinum. The germ is found in soil and can survive, grow, and produce a toxin in certain conditions. You cannot see, smell, or taste botulinum toxin – but even a small amount can be toxic.

**How can you keep yourself and others safe when it comes to home canned foods?**

- Use reliable websites for recipes that have research tested places – avoid bloggers, neighbors, and grandma’s recipe that is 80 years old.
- Some reliable sites include the National Center for Home Food Preservation, Michigan State University Extension and Ball [www.freshpreserving.com](http://www.freshpreserving.com).
- Any canning recipe book that is more than 10 years old should be avoided because science changes and canning techniques do as well.
- If you have a Ball Blue Book, check the publication date – it should be published within the last 7-8 years as recipes have changed.
- Always use a pressure canner or cooker. Pressure canning is the only recommended method for canning vegetables, meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Boiling water canners will NOT help prevent botulism poisoning.
- Electric multi-cookers are not safe and should not be used.
- Be sure the gauge of the pressure canner or cooker is accurate.
- Vent the pressure canner before pressurizing and follow the recommended cooling steps.
- Look for signs the product could be contaminated like a leaking or swollen container, a damaged or cracked container, or discoloration of the food.

[www.saginawpublichealth.org](http://www.saginawpublichealth.org)

**Sources:**
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention June 2018
- Food Safety News, July 16, 2018
- Michigan State University Extension