



UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
**Agriculture &
Natural Resources**

Family Nutrition Education Program



While honey is a safe and wholesome food for children and adults, it should not be offered to babies less than one year of age. Honey sometimes contains bacterial spores that cause infant botulism, a rare but serious disease that affects the nervous system of young babies.

Infant botulism is different from foodborne botulism. Food borne botulism is caused by a toxin that forms in food. Infant botulism occurs when conditions in the digestive tract allow *Clostridium botulinum* spores to grow and form toxins in the digestive system.

C. botulinum spores are everywhere – commonly found in dust, soil and most uncooked food. Adults and children swallow the spores without getting sick because there are protective bacteria in the gut that inhibit the growth of *C. Botulium*. Infants do not have these protective bacteria until at least six months of age.

Infant botulism is best controlled by preventing infants from swallowing botulism spores. Although honey is not the only- or most important- source of botulism spores, it is an easy item to control by omitting it from the diet of an infant.

Symptoms of infant botulism include: constipation, weak suck or cry, difficulty feeding or swallowing, lethargy and limp muscles. Call your doctor immediately if your baby has these symptoms.

Information from the National Honey Board

The Food Stamp Program helps participants to purchase foods for better diet, and funds this publication.

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