

Beware of Botulism

In the fall of 1974, one person died from Botulism in Bethel; in March, 1975, three people became ill and two people died

from Botulism at New Stuyahok. Throughout 1974 there were twenty cases of Botulism on the west coast — six of these were in Alaska.

Most cases of Botulism are caused by home preserved foods. Recently, the cause of this deadly illness was meat and fish preserved in plastic. A long time ago, the Eskimos and Indians in Alaska preserved or prepared foods by allowing them to ferment or sour.

This fermenting was done in grasses or wood where air could circulate and usually the temperature was not too warm. Now plastic bags are available and people think that the food might be cleaner in plastic bags. The food might be cleaner but it is definately not safer!

Plastic bags prevent air from circulating and provide the perfect place for the deadly bacteria called *Clostridium Botulinum* to grow. As it grows it gives off a toxin or poison.

The poison kills. The poison can be destroyed by boiling food for 15 to 20 minutes. If in doubt about the safety of the food, throw it out.