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RÉGIE RÉGIONALE DE LA NUNAVIK REGIONAL
SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES BOARD OF HEALTH
SOCIAUX DU NUNAVIK AND SOCIAL SERVICES

NEWS RELEASE

BOTULISM POISONING: PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE WITH MARINE MAMMAL MEAT

Kuujjuaq, August 6, 2021 – In the height of the summer hunting season, the Department of Public Health of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) would like to remind Nunavimmiut of the precautions to take to avoid foodborne botulism.

With the seasonal hunt for marine mammals, the risks of botulism poisoning are greater during the summer and more specifically during the preservation and preparation of traditional foods (walrus, seal, beluga). Botulism poisoning results from the ingestion of a toxin that affects the nervous system (muscles of the face and respiratory system). This toxin is produced during fermentation or conservation methods that are not suitable for meat or blubber from marine mammals.

To ensure that the toxin responsible for botulism does not develop, it's important to keep butchered meat cold as soon as possible (less than 4°C). The same measure applies during the preparation and conservation of foods from marine mammals, outdoors or indoors. As for igunaq, the Department of Public Health recommends keeping meat in the freezer (home or community) and to begin the fermentation process in the fall, when temperatures are cooler.

Traditional foods are integral parts of Nunavimmiut life. For the sake of everyone's health, the NRBHSS Department of Public Health encourages all Nunavimmiut to respect preventive measures.

The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services is a public agency created in 1978 under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. *It is responsible for nearly the entire Quebec territory located north of the 55th parallel in terms of the provision of health and social services for the inhabitants of the 14 communities.*

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Source: Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services

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