



Media Contact:  
Pamela Davenport, PIO  
(801) 468-2757  
(801) 209-0986

**News Release**  
**December 11, 2007**

## **SLVHD Warns of Infant Honey Danger**

*Honey may quiet a cough but could pose serious health risk for infants under 12 months*

(Salt Lake County) – In light of a recent FDA warning that over-the-counter cold medicines should not be used in children younger than six and a minor study indicating the effectiveness of honey in calming children’s coughs, the Salt Lake Valley Health Department (SLVHD) is reminding parents that honey should not be given to infants under 12 months because of the risk of botulism.

Following the FDA panel recommendation, parents with sick children are turning to more classic remedies this cold season. A recent study concluded that honey can provide effective cough relief for children over one year old, in most cases working more effectively than over-the-counter medicines.

“Honey may possibly be a more natural way to help calm a child’s cough,” says Sue Nicodemus, Public Health Nurse Supervisor at SLVHD. “However, because of the potential risk to kids under 12 months, honey should never be given to them.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) honey can contain spores for *Clostridium botulism*, a serious and potentially fatal disease in infants under 12 months. Although rare, an average of 110 botulism cases are reported each year, the condition is serious with over half of cases occurring in infants and 15 percent of infant botulism caused by honey.

Infants up to one year of age should not be fed raw honey, as their immune systems are not yet developed enough to fend off this normally benign strain.

“We are also seeing a lot of parents either dipping their infant’s pacifier in honey or using pacifiers containing honey,” Nicodemus continued. “Most parents do not realize they are putting their infant at risk.”

Pacifiers containing honey or corn syrup are especially prevalent among Utah’s Hispanic population. They are often brought from Mexico by family and friends, but are also available in Mexican-style businesses and shops in Utah.

Nicodemus firmly feels that “the old practice of dipping pacifiers into honey to soothe crying babies should be aborted.”

- more-

Botulism infection can cause a flaccid paralysis weakening the baby's muscles, causing a "floppy" baby. Other symptoms include constipation, lethargy, poor feeding, weak cry, droopy eyelids, expressionless face, drooling or swallowing difficulty, and occasionally, respiratory arrest. By the age of one year, most children develop enough to resist this normally benign strain of botulinum.

For more information on botulism, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

#####