



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CONTACT: Heather Bourbeau
Norma Arceo
(916) 440-7259

Avoid Wild Mushrooms, State Public Health Director Warns

SACRAMENTO – With seasonal rains promoting the growth of wild mushrooms, Dr. Ron Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and State Public Health Officer, today reminded consumers that collecting and eating wild mushrooms can cause serious illness and even death.

"It is very difficult to distinguish which mushrooms are dangerous and which are safe to eat. Therefore, we recommend that wild mushrooms not be eaten unless they have been carefully examined and determined to be edible by a mushroom expert," Chapman said.

Wild mushroom poisoning continues to cause disease, hospitalization and death among California residents. According to the California Poison Control System (CPCS), 1,748 cases of mushroom ingestion were reported statewide in 2009-2010. Among those cases:

- Two individuals died.
- Ten individuals suffered a major health outcome, such as liver failure leading to coma and/or a liver transplant, or kidney failure requiring dialysis.
- 964 were children under six years of age. These incidents usually involved the child's eating a small amount of a mushroom growing in yards or neighborhood parks.
- 948 individuals were treated at a health care facility.
- 19 were admitted to an intensive care unit.

The most serious illnesses and deaths have been linked primarily to mushrooms known to cause liver damage, including *Amanita ocreata*, or "destroying angel," and *Amanita phalloides*, also known as the "death cap." These and other poisonous mushrooms grow in some parts of California year-round, but are most commonly found during fall, late winter or spring.

Eating poisonous mushrooms can cause abdominal pain, cramping, vomiting, diarrhea, liver damage and death. Individuals who develop symptoms after eating wild mushrooms should seek immediate medical attention. Likewise, individuals with symptoms, or their treating health care providers, should immediately contact the CPCS at 1-800-222-1222.

Local mycological societies offer educational resources about mushroom identification, and may be able to help individuals identify whether mushrooms they have picked are safe or not. For more information about mycological societies in California, please visit <http://www.namyco.org/clubs/index.html>.

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