



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CONTACT: Ali Bay | 916.440.7259 | CDPHpress@cdph.ca.gov

Use Caution When Collecting, Eating Wild Mushrooms

SACRAMENTO – With seasonal rains promoting the growth of wild mushrooms, California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith is reminding people that collecting and eating hazardous wild mushrooms can lead to serious illness and even death.



"It is difficult to distinguish between wild mushrooms that are poisonous and those which are safe to eat," said Dr. Smith. "Wild mushrooms should not be eaten unless they have been carefully examined and determined to be edible by a mushroom expert."

Wild mushroom poisoning continues to make people ill and send them to the hospital. According to the [California Poison Control System](#) (CPCS), 679 cases of ingestion were reported statewide from November 2015 to October 2016. Among those cases:

- Three suffered a major health outcome, such as liver failure leading to coma and/or a liver transplant, or kidney failure requiring dialysis.
- 50 suffered a moderate health outcome, such as dehydration due to vomiting and diarrhea, or injury to the liver or kidney.
- 348 were children under six years of age. Usually the children ate a small amount of a mushrooms growing in yards or neighborhood parks.
- 415 were treated at a health care facility.
- Eight were admitted to an intensive care unit.



The most serious illnesses and deaths have been linked primarily to wild mushrooms known to cause liver damage, including *Amanita phalloides* (shown above), also known as the "death cap" and *Amanita ocreata* (shown at left), or "destroying angel." 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 or death. Anyone who develops symptoms after eating wild mushrooms should seek immediate medical attention. People who develop these symptoms, or their treating health care providers, should immediately contact Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222.

[Local mycological societies](#) offer educational resources about mushroom identification, and may be able to help people identify mushrooms they have picked.

Photos courtesy of Trent Pearce, Tilden Nature Area

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