



# News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 5, 2012  
PH12-063

**CONTACT:** Anita Gore  
Heather Bourbeau  
(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 warned consumers not to collect and eat wild mushrooms.

"It is very difficult to distinguish which mushrooms are dangerous and which are safe to eat. Consuming wild mushrooms can cause serious illness and even death," Chapman said.

"Wild mushrooms" refer to the many varieties of fungi that grow wild and are not cultivated. They tend to grow in shady, moist and humid environments.

Wild mushroom poisoning continues to cause disease, hospitalization and death among California residents. According to the [California Poison Control System](#) (CPCS), 1,602 cases of mushroom ingestion were reported statewide from January 2011 through November 2012. Among those cases:

- Five individuals died (four in November 2012).
- Eighteen suffered a major health outcome, such as liver failure leading to coma and/or a liver transplant, or kidney failure requiring dialysis.
- 903 were children under six years of age. Usually the child ate a small amount of a mushroom growing in yards or neighborhood parks.
- 848 were treated at a health care facility.
- 30 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. Anyone who develops symptoms after eating wild mushrooms should seek immediate medical attention. 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 the [North American Mycological Association's Website](#).

[www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)

