

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

## NEWS RELEASE

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Release

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Media to  
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1222

800-962-1253 if outside NJ

### **Mushroom Poisonings Up in the Garden State** - State's Poison Center Braces for These Preventable Injuries -

**(Newark, NJ)** – “Picking and eating mushrooms growing in gardens, on lawns, in fields or in the woods is a dangerous game,” says Diane Calello, MD, [NJ Poison Control Center](#) Executive and Medical Director, [Rutgers NJ Medical School’s Department of Emergency Medicine](#). “Even experienced mushroom pickers are fooled by toxic look-alikes at times.”

A good portion of the summer has been plagued by soaring temperatures, high humidity and soaking rains – the perfect recipe for a dangerous mushroom season in the Garden State. So far, 45 mushroom exposure cases were managed by the medical experts at the NJ Poison Control Center since the beginning of July. Sadly, some of these cases have resulted in emergency room visits. Symptoms of mushroom poisoning include intense vomiting and diarrhea, dehydration, damage to vital organs like the liver and even death.

#### **Snapshot**

Date range: July 1 – August 13, 2018

Number: 45 exposures (38 human, 7 animal/pet)

Age of patients: 9 months to 70 years old

NJ Counties: Exposures reported in 15 of 21 counties

Seen in hospital emergency rooms: 13 patients

“This is a serious issue. No matter the scenario, it is unsafe to pick and eat mushrooms found in the wild,” says Calello. Don’t be fooled – many edible mushrooms have toxic look-a-likes. The cooking process does not prevent the toxic health effects of some mushrooms. Depending on the type of mushroom, eating even a few bites can cause

serious health concerns. “It is rare that an injury is truly preventable, but that is the case here. Fortunately, mushroom poisoning can be prevented by simply not eating wild mushrooms.”

Adults are not the only one’s enticed by wild mushrooms; children and pets are often intrigued by mushroom patches growing in backyards. Make sure to always supervise children and pets outdoors. Pets can suffer serious health injuries and even death from eating wild mushrooms.

The NJ Poison Control Center offers the following tips for potential mushroom exposures:

- Time is of the essence when it comes to mushroom poisoning. Do not wait for symptoms to appear or spend time searching the internet for next steps.
- Call the Poison Control Center’s Poison Help line, 1-800-222-1222, immediately to get the medical help or information you need. Our help is free and available 24/7 to NJ residents. The Poison Center may arrange for an expert to identify the mushroom.
- Remove any remaining parts of the mushroom from the person’s mouth and place those fragments and all mushrooms that are in the immediate vicinity of the incident into one or more paper bags (NOT plastic!).
- Take a digital photograph of the mushroom(s) in question. It helps to take a picture of the mushroom next to other objects such as a coin, ruler, etc. to provide a sense of scale.

Poison Control Centers are not only a great resource in the event of an emergency, but experts are also available to answer questions or concerns you may have, for free 24/7. Save the Poison Help line, 1-800-222-1222, in your phone today so you’re prepared for what may happen tomorrow.

### **Help is Just a Phone Call Away!**

Stay Connected: Facebook ([@NJPIES](#)) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](#)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc.

**Real People. Real Answers.**