

July 21, 2006

## **Health advisory issued on consuming wild mushrooms**

Toronto Public Health is advising the public of the potential health risks associated with eating wild mushrooms after a 44 year-old man was hospitalized from eating wild mushrooms. The toxic mushrooms have been identified as “Amanita’ (bisporigera species), and can be fatal.

"Edible mushrooms may appear similar to poisonous species. Unless you are a mushroom expert, our advice to the public is to not pick or eat wild mushrooms. Mistakes can be fatal," said Dr. Howard Shapiro, Associate Medical Officer of Health.

“Children can be at increased risk from consuming poisonous mushrooms,” said Dr. Margaret Thompson, Medical Director of the Ontario Regional Poison Information Centre at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. “Be proactive; remove mushrooms from your lawn to protect children. If children eat a wild mushroom, seek medical attention immediately. If possible, bring a sample of the mushroom with you. The faster you get treatment, the better chance of full recovery.”

Fatal poisonings are rare in Ontario as the majority of affected people recover fully. Depending on the type of mushroom, symptoms may take a few days to develop. Symptoms most commonly associated with eating poisonous mushrooms include nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps and diarrhea. More severe symptoms include sweating, convulsions, hallucinations and coma. Toronto Public Health issued a similar warning in 2003 after a 62 year-old woman died from consuming another type of wild mushroom in Toronto.

Wild mushrooms are found throughout urban centres in back yards and parks as well as in rural areas.

"There are many types of poisonous mushrooms in Ontario," said Dr. Shapiro. “Although mushroom gathering is common in many cultures and parts of the world, people should be very careful, as some poisonous species found in Canada resemble edible mushrooms from other countries.”

Anyone with health concerns related to eating mushrooms should consult a health care provider or call the local Poison Information Centre. In Toronto, call 416-813-5900; outside Toronto call 1-800-268-9017.

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