



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

Fact Sheet: Wild Mushrooms May Be Poisonous

Are Wild Mushrooms Poisonous?

Some are. About 250 species of wild mushrooms found in North America are poisonous. Many more can cause varying degrees of adverse health effects. The BC Drug & Poison Information Centre reports on average 200 calls per year related to wild mushroom exposures.

20% of calls resulted in moderate, severe, or potential toxic illnesses.

Who Gets Sick?

Severe illnesses do occur when poisonous wild mushrooms are consumed. There were 39 death cap mushroom queries from 2017-2021.

In 2016, a toddler in BC died from eating a meal of harvested toxic wild mushrooms.



Death cap mushroom: *Amanita phalloides*

Two-thirds (66%) of all nearly 1000 calls between 2017 and 2021 were parents concerned about toddlers accidentally ingesting wild mushrooms, very few young children became more than moderately ill.

Teenagers and adults, however, exposed to a larger amount of TOXIC mushrooms from ***unintentionally harvesting and eating the wrong types of mushrooms accounted for half of the more severe illnesses.***

What are the Symptoms?

Mushroom poisonings may cause

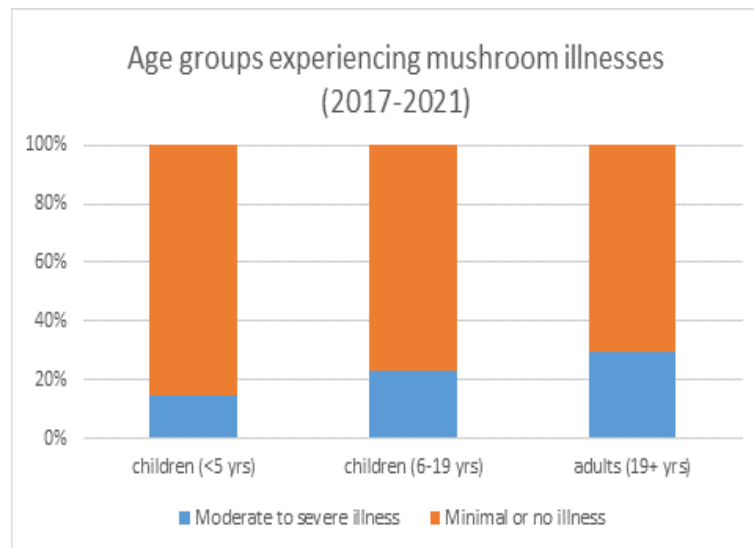
nausea	vomiting	liver failure
hallucinations	seizure	coma
kidney failure		death

The severity of attack depends upon the type of mushroom, the amount consumed and sometimes the susceptibility of the individual to the poison.

What to do if you or your child has eaten a wild mushroom

Remove the mushroom from the child's mouth and hands. Keep the leftover mushroom, or find a similar type for identification when describing it to poison information specialists. They can advise you on first aid treatment and whether you need to seek out immediate medical help.

**Phone the BC Drug and Poison
Information Centre:
604.682.5050
or toll free at 1.800.567.8911**



How Do I Protect Myself?

Buy mushrooms from a retail store that receives their mushrooms from a commercial grower. This is the surest way to ensure your safety.

Be cautious about buying wild mushrooms from street vendors, farmers markets, non-approved retailers or other sources that cannot verify their knowledge and source of the mushrooms. Selling wild mushrooms is an unregulated industry in Canada.

Harvesting your own Wild Mushrooms

In some cases identifying the poisonous species is difficult even for the experts. So, only harvest wild mushrooms if you are absolutely certain they are safe. Be prepared to identify the mushrooms with the help of a good field guide or knowledgeable friend. Join a local mushroom club.

Store harvested mushrooms in paper (not plastic) bags at cool temperatures.

Become knowledgeable with regards to mushroom terminology and take no risks when harvesting a mushroom for consumption. Should a mushroom not match even one of the characteristics listed in your field guide for an edible species, **don't eat it!**

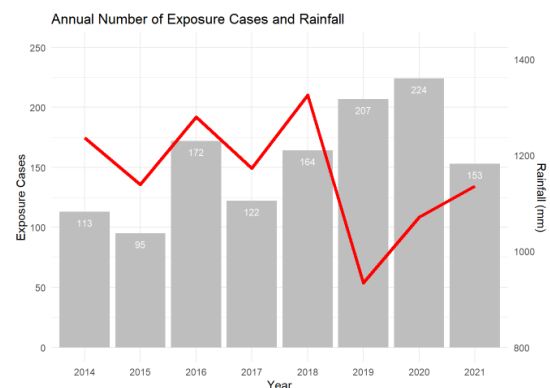
You also cannot identify poisonous mushrooms by taste or smell – it has been reported that some poisonous mushrooms actually taste good!

Are Pictures Useful?

Only to a limited extent. Edible mushrooms may have poisonous look-a-likes, and many species have yet to be identified. In some poisonings, patients have stated that the mushroom looked like the picture of an edible mushroom.

How Do I Protect My Children?

This isn't easy. Young children tend to put anything and everything in their mouths. Check outdoor play areas and remove any mushrooms before allowing the children to play outside. Talk to teenagers about the dangers of ingesting wild mushrooms to get high – and what to do if someone has a bad reaction.



The Poison Information Centre notes increases in the number of calls from people who have become ill after eating wild mushrooms that were foraged (picked) outside. Calls sometimes increase following rainy periods that promote wild mushroom growth. Wild and potentially toxic mushrooms can be found on lawns, in parks, along roadsides, or in the forest.

Environmental Health Services

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