

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

## NEWS RELEASE

Media to contact:  
 800-222-1222  
 800-962-1253 if outside NJ

For Immediate Release  
 August 14, 2018

### 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-a-likes 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.**

#### **Available for Media Interviews**

Diane P. Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Managing Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

#### **About NJPIES**

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES) is New Jersey's only poison control center. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer free consultation through hotline services (telephone, text and chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. In addition, it tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the New Jersey Department of Health, U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NJPIES' confidential services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. When needed, NJPIES responds to other emergent health issues by expanding hotline services.

NJPIES is designated as the state's regional poison control center by the New Jersey Department of Health and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It is a division of the Department of Emergency Medicine of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers Health Sciences in Newark. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health, NJ Hospitals and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents should save the Poison Help number, 1-800-222-1222, in their mobile phones and post the number somewhere visible in their home. NJPIES is also available via text [8002221222@njpies.org](tel:8002221222) and chat [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org).  
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#### **About Rutgers**

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.

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