

Death Cap Mushroom

Amanita phalloides

The Death Cap mushroom is a deadly poisonous introduced fungus that is responsible for 90% of all deaths related to mushroom consumption. There have been two fatalities, and approximately a dozen reported cases of poisoning associated with Death Cap Mushrooms in the ACT.



Immature & Mature Death Cap Mushrooms
Photo: R Windsor

Description

Cap: 40-160mm wide, may be white, but usually pale green to yellow in colour, or fawn if the mushroom is older, or located in full sun. The cap can be slippery or sticky to touch, and shiny when dry.

Gills: White, crowded and not attached to stalk.

Stalk: Normally white in colour, but may be pale green. Up to 15cm long with a papery cup shaped volva at the base (often buried in the ground). Normally a skirt-like ring is present high on the stem.

Distinctive Features: The white gills, cup-like volva and high skirt like ring help to distinguish the Death Cap Mushroom.

Occurance: South Eastern Australia.

Habitat: Commonly found near established oak trees and possibly some other trees, usually during late summer to early winter after good rain or heavy irrigation.

Toxicity: Extremely poisonous. One Mushroom contains enough poison to kill an adult. Cooking or peeling does not inactivate the toxin, and all parts are poisonous.



Watch for warning signs posted around the ACT

For absolute safety avoid all mushrooms with white gills, and any wild mushrooms, unless definitely identified as non-poisonous.

Symptoms

Onset of symptoms occurs 6–24 hours or more after ingestion of mushrooms. Symptoms include violent stomach pains, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Symptoms may subside for 1 to 2 days giving a false impression of recovery. However, by this stage the toxin will have already caused serious liver damage. Death from liver failure can occur many days after ingestion.

Medical Treatment

A person who suspects that they may have eaten poisonous mushrooms should seek immediate medical attention, and where possible take a whole mushroom sample for identification. The sooner treatment begins the better the chances of survival. Medical assistance should be sought at hospital emergency departments, or by calling the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 (24 hours).

Known Locations of the Death Cap Mushroom in the ACT

Acton	Ainslie	Commonwealth Park
Deakin	Dickson	O'Connor
Red Hill	Reid	Yarralumla

Further Reading

Mushrooms & Toadstools of Australia by C.J. Shepherd & C.J. Totterdell, published by CSIRO.

Bibliography

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Death Cap Mushroom
Artwork K O'Ryan
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