

Canberra residents warned to be **Aware of Death Cap Mushrooms**

ACT Health is reminding people to steer clear of the world's most deadly mushroom – the Death Cap. All parts of this mushroom are poisonous, and eating just one mushroom can be fatal.

Three people have recently been admitted to ACT hospitals after becoming ill from eating Death Cap Mushrooms.

“The Death Cap mushrooms often grow near established oak trees and are found when there is warm, wet weather. In Canberra this usually occurs in Autumn, but recent summer rain means Death Caps can be found growing in Canberra”, said Dr Michael Hall, Director of The Canberra Hospital Emergency Department.

“The fully-grown Death Cap mushroom cap is silky smooth, and its colour varies from white to greenish-brown. The gills are white – unlike the pink or brown gills of the common field mushroom. The stem is white to pale yellow-green,”

“High on the stem is a skirt-like white ring, which is sometimes missing. The bottom of the stem emerges from a white cup, which is partly buried in the soil.”

“The small button Death Cap can be very difficult to distinguish from an edible mushroom.”

“People should should not eat any mushroom unless they can be absolutely certain that it is not poisonous. It can be difficult for even experienced collectors to tell poisonous and safe species of wild mushroom apart.”

“The small button Death Cap can be very difficult to distinguish from an edible mushroom.”

“So unless people are completely sure, they should avoid any white-gilled mushroom”

”Anyone who suspects that they might have eaten Death Cap mushrooms should seek urgent medical help, preferably at a hospital.”

“The sooner treatment begins, the better the patient’s chances of survival,” Dr Hall said.

In the last decade, there have been three fatalities associated with Death Cap mushrooms in the ACT. During this period there have been around a dozen reported cases of poisoning.

A Fact Sheet providing important information about the Death Cap mushroom is currently available online at www.health.act.gov.au/publications

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