

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Talk to your neighbours about the dangers of Death Cap Mushrooms**

After recent summer rain, ACT Chief Health Officer Dr Paul Kelly today issued another reminder not to pick wild mushrooms, while encouraging Canberrans to talk to their families, friends and neighbours about the dangers of death cap mushrooms.

“Death Cap mushrooms often grow near established oak trees, and are found when there is warm, wet weather,” Dr Kelly said.

“In Canberra this usually occurs in autumn, but as Canberra is anticipating more summer rain, it means Death Caps can be found growing now.

“Canberrans should talk to their neighbours about Death Cap mushrooms to ensure everyone is aware of the dangers.

“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.

“All parts of this mushroom are poisonous, and eating just one mushroom can be fatal. People 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.

“So unless people are completely sure, they should avoid any wild mushroom, and anyone who suspects 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.

“For the community’s information, the Health Directorate has increased its annual public awareness campaign, with new flyers and posters developed with a simple, direct message to be delivered to every Canberra household later in February.

“Health has also written to all food businesses, highlighting the risk of collecting wild mushrooms.

“Signage at known Death Cap mushroom locations will be updated, and flyers and posters located at numerous public places, including shopping malls, places of worship, the National Multicultural

Festival, Tertiary Education Institutions, and at Canberra’s Visitor Centre,” the Chief Health Officer said.

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

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