

Death Cap mushroom season is here again

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.

“The Death Cap mushrooms grow mainly near established oak trees in autumn as the weather becomes cooler,” Mr John Woollard, Director of the Health Protection Service said.

“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.”

“So unless people are completely sure, they should avoid any white-gilled mushroom, and should not eat any mushroom unless they can be absolutely certain that it is not poisonous.”

“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,” Mr Woollard said.

There have been two fatalities associated with Death Cap mushrooms in the ACT in the last 14 years, one in 1995 and the other in 2002. During this period there have been around a dozen reported cases of poisoning. It is understood that a person is currently in The Canberra Hospital with symptoms of suspected Death Cap mushroom 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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