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## IPC Warns of Dangers from Fall Mushrooms

### *Unfriendly Fungi Can Cause Poisonings*

As the cool, damp weather of fall sets in, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) receives an influx of calls about a potential threat popping up in neighborhoods across the country: mushrooms. While many types of toxic mushrooms can be found in Illinois, most are minimally to moderately toxic. In rare cases, they can be very poisonous and require hospitalization.

"The Illinois Poison Center receives hundreds of calls each year about mushrooms found in lawns, neighborhood parks and forest preserves," says Michael Wahl, MD, Medical Director, IPC. "Adults, and especially children, should be aware of the health risks associated with consuming wild mushrooms and what to do if they are ingested."

### Health Risks

Among the largest concerns when consuming poisonous mushrooms is liver damage from mushrooms that contain amatoxin. Unlike most gastrointestinal irritants, which typically cause symptoms within two to three hours, amatoxin-containing mushrooms may not produce symptoms until six to 24 hours after ingestion. Delaying treatment can result in adverse outcomes. The amatoxin-containing mushrooms most likely to be consumed in Illinois are:

- *Amanita bisporigera*, notable for its white cap, stem and gills, and a distinct cup of tissue at the base of the stem; and
- *Galerina marginata*, a small brown-orange mushroom that can easily be mistaken for the edible honey mushroom.

Wild mushrooms can still cause serious illness even if they do not contain amatoxin. Some wild mushrooms contain gastrointestinal irritants which can cause vomiting and diarrhea. The most common of these mushrooms include:

- *Chlorophyllum molybdites*, which grows throughout the summer and fall months in Illinois and has olive green gills and oatmeal-like patches on its cap; and
- *Omphalotus illudens*, which is also called the Jack-O'-Lantern mushroom for its bright orange color and is often mistaken for the edible species chanterelles.

Even edible mushrooms can be dangerous. Eating raw wild mushrooms or spoiled mushrooms can cause symptoms similar to those of food poisoning, including vomiting, diarrhea and stomach discomfort.

Although mushrooms containing psilocybin, also known as “magic mushrooms” or “shrooms,” can be found in the wild in Illinois, they are illegal to grow, possess and sell in the United States. The IPC strongly advises mushroom foragers to take caution when consuming any wild mushroom for any purpose, especially since many mushrooms can be misidentified. For example, psilocybin-containing mushrooms could be mistaken for the deadly *Galerina* species of mushrooms.

As with most poisons, an individual’s symptoms can depend on many factors, including age, weight and amount consumed. If a poisoning is suspected, don’t wait for symptoms to appear, and instead, call the IPC immediately.

### **Identifying Poisonous Mushrooms**

Mushroom identification is extremely difficult and is best left to mycologists, who study fungi and have years of training.

### **In an Emergency**

If you or someone you know may have eaten a potentially poisonous mushroom, call the IPC immediately. To help with identification:

- Collect the mushroom in question;
- Carefully dig up a few additional mushrooms, complete with underground parts;
- If there is more than one kind of mushroom in the area, collect all of the different types;
- Note if the mushroom was growing on wood, soil or other material, or if it was growing alone or in clusters; and
- If possible, take digital photos of the mushroom from different angles, including its stem and the top and underside of its cap, to send to IPC staff.

Using the digital images and other information collected, the IPC can consult with expert mycologists in different parts of the state to obtain an initial identification of the mushroom, helping the IPC staff to make appropriate treatment recommendations.

For more information on fall safety hazards from the IPC, [click here](#).

IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays. If you suspect that you or someone you know has been exposed to a potentially harmful substance, please call the IPC at 800-222-1222. The call is free and confidential. For more information, visit the IPC’s website: <http://illinoispoisoncenter.org>.

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The Illinois Poison Center is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by specially trained physicians, nurses and pharmacists.