



**To:** CAHAN San Diego Participants

**Date:** December 18, 2025

**From:** Public Health Services

**Health Advisory: Amatoxin Poisoning from Foraged Wild Mushrooms**

#### Key Messages

- The California Department of Public Health has reported cases of amatoxin poisoning associated with foraged wild mushrooms across California, resulting in severe hepatotoxicity and at least one confirmed death statewide.
- Although cases have been reported in Central and Northern California, the risk is statewide, and wet weather increases the potential for mushroom growth in San Diego County parks, woodlands, and open spaces.
- Death cap (*Amanita phalloides*) mushrooms contain amatoxin and can be easily mistaken for edible mushrooms.
- Children and pets are at risk due to exploratory ingestion.
- Health care providers should contact California Poison Control System at 1-800-222-1222 for guidance on diagnosing and treating patients with suspected mushroom poisoning.

#### Situation

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH), in coordination with the California Poison Control System (CPCS) and local health jurisdictions, has identified severe cases of amatoxin poisoning linked to the consumption of foraged wild mushrooms across California. These cases have resulted in hospitalization, acute liver failure, and death.

Recent seasonal rainfall increases the likelihood of wild mushroom growth throughout California, including San Diego County. Toxic mushrooms may be present in parks, canyons, open spaces, coastal foothills, and residential yards. While no confirmed cases have been identified in San Diego County at this time, the risk of exposure is statewide, and ingestion may occur through intentional foraging, accidental ingestion by children, or consumption of shared foods.

#### Background

Amatoxin poisoning is caused by ingestion of wild mushrooms containing amatoxins, a group of heat-stable toxins that inhibit RNA polymerase II, resulting in impaired protein synthesis and cellular death, particularly in the liver and kidneys.

Mushroom species commonly associated with amatoxin poisoning include:

- *Amanita phalloides* (death cap)
- *Amanita ocreata* (destroying angel)
- Other related *Amanita* and *Galerina* species

These mushrooms may closely resemble edible varieties and are not reliably distinguishable by taste, smell, or cooking method.

The clinical course of amatoxin poisoning typically occurs in three phases:

1. Gastrointestinal Phase (6-24 hours post-ingestion): Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, profuse diarrhea
2. Latent Phase (24-36 hours): temporary improvement of gastrointestinal symptoms, which may falsely suggest recovery.
3. Hepatic Phase (36-96 hours): progressive liver injury with elevated transaminases, coagulopathy, jaundice, hepatic encephalopathy, acute kidney injury, and potential liver failure.

Severe cases may require liver transplantation and can be fatal despite aggressive supportive care.

Confirmatory testing for amatoxin may be considered by amatoxin detection in the urine or mushroom identification. CDPH and CPCS can assist with laboratory analyses of patient urine samples or mushroom specimens.

### **Actions Requested**

1. **Maintain** a high index of suspicion for amatoxin poisoning in patients presenting with:
  - Acute or delayed gastrointestinal symptoms, and
  - History of wild mushroom ingestion or unknown food exposures.
2. **Consult** the California Poison Control System (CPCS) immediately at 1-800-222-1222 (available 24/7) for guidance on diagnosis and management.
3. **Monitor** closely for liver injury, including liver function tests, coagulation studies, renal function.
  - Early involvement of medical toxicology and liver transplant centers is recommended for patients with signs of significant hepatic injury.
4. **Report** all suspected or confirmed cases immediately to the County of San Diego Epidemiology Unit by calling 619-692-8499 (8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday); 858-565-5255 (after hours and holidays).
5. **Counsel** patients and families:
  - Don't consume foraged wild mushrooms.
  - Cooking does not make wild mushrooms safe.
  - Seek immediate medical care if symptoms develop after ingestion.

### **Resources**

#### *Federal*

[Amanita phalloides Mushroom Poisonings — Northern California, December 2016 | MMWR](#)

#### *State*

CDPH: [Severe, Potentially Fatal Liver Damage in Children and Adults Associated with Consumption of Foraged Wild Mushrooms](#)

Thank you for your participation.

### **CAHAN San Diego**

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