

The death cap mushroom (*Amanita phalloides*) is poisonous

Death cap mushrooms cause most of the fatal mushroom poisonings in the world.

This mushroom now grows in urban areas of British Columbia, even though it has not yet been found in a BC forest.

The death cap mushroom is considered an invasive species. Mushrooms can normally be found growing in the fall or earlier if lawns are watered.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Not documented as a risk in BC from January to June						Excessive lawn watering		Normal fruiting period: late August to early November			

Death caps were introduced to BC from imported European trees (beech, chestnut, hornbeam, English oak and many others). There are over 100 sightings of this mushroom in Victoria and the lower mainland (Vancouver to the Fraser Valley) where these trees now grow. Death cap also grows with our native Garry oak.

We don't recommend removing these trees as they provide shade and beauty. Consult a garden nursery when choosing new trees for sites.



Death cap mushroom at various stages of maturity

Edible look-alike mushrooms

Death cap mushrooms can look like Asian paddy straw mushrooms, a cultivated edible species which does not grow naturally here. In 2016 a BC child died after eating a death cap that was mistaken for a paddy straw mushroom.



Asian paddy-straw mushrooms

Death caps can also look like puffball mushrooms when they are immature and in the small button stage. In 2003 an adult nearly died after mistaking a death cap for one of these.



Puffball mushrooms

These mushrooms are particularly risky to recent immigrants who have a cultural tradition of foraging food from their environment.

Protecting yourself

Only pick wild mushrooms if you are or are with a knowledgeable person who can identify the mushrooms. Do not eat anything you cannot identify is an edible species. Scan to see local BC mushroom species.



Call poison control at 1-800-567-8911

Death caps are especially dangerous to children and pets. Limit their access to death cap mushrooms.

- Avoid areas during play-time and walks where death caps are known to grow.
- Immediately remove any mushrooms from their mouths to avoid risk of swallowing. Consult your doctor or veterinarian if any part of a death cap mushroom was ingested.
- Remove and dispose of death caps in the area.



Disposing of death caps

If you find death caps growing in your yard, dispose of them by:

- Putting into the municipal compost (green bin), or
- Bagging and disposing into the regular garbage.

Home compost may not reach high enough temperature to inactivate spores.

Hand contact with death caps is not a risk, however, you may wear gloves when handling. Always wash your hands after handling.

Mowing the lawn will not get rid of the mushroom fungus (most of the fungus lives underground). Removal before mowing to avoid spread is recommended. Avoid watering in areas where death caps grow, otherwise death caps may grow earlier.



Symptoms of poisoning

The death cap contains toxins that damage the liver and kidney. Cooking does not inactivate the toxin.



— 1 to 3 out of every 10 people who get sick from death cap mushrooms will die —

After ingestion, within 8 to 12 hours, these symptoms occur:

- cramping
- abdominal pain
- vomiting
- watery diarrhea
- dehydration

After 24 hours you may feel better, and think you had a cold or flu. But during this time the death cap toxins are damaging vital organ functions.

A second wave of diarrhea and cramping occur within 72 hours after eating the mushroom, resulting in **severe illness**:

- low blood pressure
- jaundice
- liver failure
- kidney failure
- seizures
- delirium
- convulsions
- coma
- gastrointestinal bleeding

The time from initial symptoms to death is 7 to 10 days in severe illness. Organ transplants may be required to prevent death.

If you have eaten the mushroom go to the hospital and call poison control immediately at 1-800-567-8911

The following agencies participated in the creation of this pamphlet



BC Centre for Disease Control
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority



For more information please consult these sites:

www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species

www.bccdc.ca/health-info/food-your-health/fruits-vegetables-grains/wild-mushrooms

www.vanmyco.org

Photo credits: Wikipedia commons 2005-09 (death cap); Richard Nadon (puffballs); Fred Notzel (paddy straw); Justin Pierce Mushroom Observer 80840 (death caps during maturity).

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DEATH CAP MUSHROOMS CAN KILL

If you have eaten the mushroom go to the hospital and call poison control immediately at 1-800-567-8911



These mushrooms grow in urban areas of Victoria and Vancouver.

Read this guide to protect yourself, your family, and your pets.