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PRESS RELEASE

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DHHS Issues Warning about Accidentally Eating Poison Mushrooms

Concord, NH - The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) is warning residents to be cautious when consuming wild mushrooms. In general, eating wild mushrooms is dangerous unless you are an expert. It is recommended that children not eat any wild mushrooms and adults who eat them must first ensure they are safe. Recently, there has been an increase in emergency room visits related to New Hampshire residents eating potentially poisonous mushrooms.

"This increase is concerning because in the past we have seen cases of young children and young adults ingesting wild mushrooms and fungi and becoming ill," said Public Health Director Dr. José Montero, "but now we are seeing people of all ages affected. We want to make sure everyone is aware of the dangers that wild mushrooms can cause if they are poisonous, especially because mushrooms may be more abundant now with the wet weather we have been having."

In 2009, DPHS surveillance detected 8 cases of emergency room visits due to ingesting wild mushrooms. In 2010 that number was 11. So far in 2011 there have been 31, with 18 of them occurring in September alone. "While this is just one means of tracking illness caused by mushrooms and not necessarily comprehensive," said Montero, "the increase is alarming."

There is no approved treatment for mushroom poisoning. Symptoms may not begin until hours after ingestion and can include abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, fever, severe diarrhea, a change in heart rhythm, and low blood pressure. There are many different types of mushrooms that grow in New Hampshire, and some of them are toxic. Small amounts of wild mushrooms often cause little or no effect when swallowed. However, as little as one bit of a poisonous mushroom can cause serious injury or death. Many toxic mushrooms look a lot like non-toxic ones.

If someone tastes or eats a wild mushroom, call the Northern New England Poison Control (NNEPC) right away at 1-800-222-1222. Trained nurses and pharmacists staff the Poison Center 24-hour helpline. For more information, visit the NNEPC website at www.mmc.org/workfiles/mmc_services/Mushroom%202-7-06.pdf.