COUNTY OF MARIN

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Promoting and protecting health, well-being, self-sufficiency, and safety of all in Marin County.

MARIN HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Health, Well-being & Safety

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Public Health Advisory

Life-Threatening Mushroom Toxicity During Foraging Season

Summary

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is reporting multiple cases of **severe amatoxin-associated hepatotoxicity** following ingestion of **foraged wild mushrooms**, primarily *Amanita phalloides* (Death Cap) and *Amanita ocreata*. These highly toxic species are common in Northern California and closely resemble edible varieties. All identified exposures to date involve **wild-foraged mushrooms**, not commercially distributed products.

Since mid-November, **23 patients** across multiple counties, including a patient who foraged in Marin, have been treated in connection with this ongoing Amanita mushroom poisoning outbreak. Initial care has occurred in hospitals in Monterey, Alameda, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz counties, with several patients requiring transfer to tertiary centers for advanced management. Since August 1, the California Poison Control System has received 358 mushroom ingestion reports, including 204 individuals who required medical evaluation. Marin County has also received confirmed mushroom poisoning reports through Poison Control; none have required hospitalization.

Clinical Presentation

Primary care providers may be the first point of contact for symptomatic patients. Consider amatoxin toxicity in any patient who develops acute gastrointestinal symptoms after consuming wild mushrooms, especially if there is brief improvement followed by clinical deterioration. Illness in multiple family members after foraging further heightens suspicion.

Amatoxin poisoning follows a **characteristic triphasic course**:

1. **6–24 hours post ingestion**
   - Profuse vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain. Symptoms can mimic viral gastroenteritis or foodborne illness
2. **24–48 hours**
   - Transient symptomatic improvement; labs may already show rising AST/ALT.
3. **48–96 hours**
   - Acute liver injury → possible fulminant hepatic failure; rapidly rising AST/ALT levels and disproportionate coagulopathy are key diagnostic clues.

Immediate Clinical Actions

- **Confirm exposure:** Ask about timing, amount eaten, where mushrooms were foraged, and whether others are symptomatic.
- **Do not delay referral:** Patients with any symptoms after wild mushroom ingestion should be sent **directly to the ED** for evaluation and serial labs (CMP, PT/INR, bilirubin, CBC, lactate).
- **Call California Poison Control for guidance: 1-800-222-1222 (24/7).**
- **Escalate early:** ED clinicians should consider early transfer to a liver center if INR rises, LFTs worsen, acidosis develops, or mental status changes occur.

Veterinarian Information

Toxic wild mushrooms are also a significant hazard for dogs, which commonly ingest them during outdoor activity. Suspect toxicity in animals with sudden vomiting, diarrhea, drooling, abdominal discomfort, or lethargy after possible mushroom exposure. Early signs may briefly improve before severe liver injury develops.

- Obtain baseline labs and monitor liver enzymes and coagulation.
- Initiate early decontamination and supportive care as appropriate.
- Consult ASPCA Animal Poison Control (1-888-426-4435) for guidance.

Reporting

Notify Marin County Public Health of suspected mushroom poisoning at (415) 473-4163 during regular business hours. If after hours, contact the Health Officer on call at (415) 499-7237.

Sincerely,

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This advisory was reviewed for language and readability using AI-assisted editing tools.