
PUBLIC SAFETY BULLETIN

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BC Coroners Service

WILD MUSHROOMS CAN BE DEADLY

VICTORIA – As B.C.'s wild mushroom season gets underway, the BC Coroners Service (BCCS) is warning the public that eating wild mushrooms can be deadly.

The advisory comes as the result of the investigation into the death of an 18-year-old North Saanich teen last year. The results confirm Morgan Makowecki died of amanitin poisoning after ingesting a species of mushroom thought to be edible little brown mushrooms at a party.

Amanitin is a lethal toxin most commonly found in wild mushroom species known as Amanitas in B.C., which are quite distinctive in appearance. However, it is also found in several other species of mushroom common in the province, such as the Deadly Galerina (*Galerina autumnalis*) and *Conocybe filaris*, which are small and brown and closely resemble other fungi that are considered edible. Similar characteristics and growing locations across species make mushroom identification extremely difficult. Unless you are 100 per cent certain of identification, you should not eat wild mushrooms.

The amanitin toxin attacks the liver, but its effects are usually delayed for some hours. Intense gastrointestinal distress including nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhea are an indication that medical help should be sought immediately. The initial symptoms are followed by a brief period of apparent improvement but the amanitin toxin is still present and causing severe liver damage. By the time a person is showing symptoms of liver failure, the effects of the toxin are rarely reversible.

The BC Coroners Service is responsible for the investigation of all unnatural, sudden and unexpected, unexplained or unattended deaths. It makes recommendations to improve public safety and prevent death in similar circumstances.

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