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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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OCEAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT WARNS OF PICKING AND EATING WILD MUSHROOMS

Daniel Regenye, Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) Public Health Coordinator, said that the OCHD has received information from the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System that they have seen an increase in calls related to people picking and eating wild mushrooms that they thought were edible. Regenye said, "Each year, many people find themselves hospitalized after eating wild mushrooms. Even a few bites of certain mushrooms can cause severe illness. Symptoms of mushroom poisoning can include intense vomiting and diarrhea, damage to vital organs, such as the liver, and possibly death."

Freeholder Deputy Director Gerry P. Little, Liaison to the Ocean County Board of Health, said, "With all the wet weather we have had, mushrooms seem to be growing everywhere. It is difficult to tell the difference between poisonous and harmless mushrooms, which can grow right next to each other. The warnings about toxic mushrooms need to be taken seriously. Children should also be taught to not put any type of mushroom or other wild plants into their mouths."

Leslie Terjesen, OCHD Public Information Officer, said that if someone does put a questionable mushroom in their mouth, remove any remaining parts of the mushroom from the victim's mouth, and IMMEDIATELY call **the NJ Poison HELP Line at 1-800-222-1222**. Do not take any chances with poisonous mushrooms. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and every day of the year. Hearing impaired individuals may call 973-926-8008. You can also visit the Ocean County Health Department website at www.ochd.org and click on the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System under RESOURCES.

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