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Ministry of Health Urges Persons to be Cautious about Ackee Preparation

The Ministry of Health is urging the public to be cautious in the preparation and consumption of Ackee to avoid poisoning. If Ackee is not prepared properly, it can be harmful due to the potential high levels of toxins. Two cases of ackee poisoning have so far been reported since the start of the year.

Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Winston De La Haye says only fit and well opened ackees are to be used by householders. “Ackee should be allowed to open naturally and fully on the tree before it is picked and eaten or sold. They should not be opened by force, or by using a knife or any other implement. **If not properly ripened, ackee contains high levels of a toxin called hypoglycin which can potentially lead to death if consumed,**” he said.

Dr. De La Haye says there are precautionary steps that can be taken to ensure the proper preparation of the fruit. “Thoroughly clean the fruit by removing the seed and the pinkish/reddish membrane. Wash the ackee properly, cook before eating and dispose of the water used.” It is also advised that other foods such as salt fish, ground provision and rice are cooked separately.

Symptoms of ackee poisoning include vomiting, stomach cramps/abdominal pain, dizziness, diarrhoea and sweating. If persons are experiencing these symptoms they should seek medical attention immediately and should have a sweet drink while on their way to the health centre or hospital.

For more information persons can also contact the Ministry of Health or the nearest health center.

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