Press release

Increase in poisonings due to mushroom consumption: be vigilant!

In response to an increase in the number of cases of poisonings due to mushroom consumption reported to the French Poison Control and Monitoring Centres (CAPTVs), ANSES, the Directorate General for Health (DGS) and the CAPTVs are issuing a warning to wild mushroom gatherers and reminding them of the good practices to be observed.

The cooler and wetter weather conditions in the last ten days or so have promoted the growth of wild mushrooms, leading to an increase in the number of poisonings observed. Indeed, while the poison control centres recorded between 15 and 50 cases a week from July to the end of August, a total of 181 poisoning cases have been recorded in the past two weeks. This type of poisoning can have serious health consequences (severe digestive disorders, liver damage that may require a transplant) and can even be fatal. Five serious cases have been recorded since July 2017.

In most cases, these poisonings result from confusion with other edible mushrooms, hence the importance of vigilance, both for connoisseurs and occasional pickers. To prevent these cases, which are regularly observed year after year, ANSES and the DGS make the following recommendations:

- only pick mushrooms with which you are completely familiar: some highly poisonous fungi closely resemble edible species;
- if you have the slightest doubt about the condition or identification of any of the mushrooms you have picked, do not consume them until you have had them checked by a specialist in the subject. You can seek advice from a pharmacist or local mycology associations and societies;
- only pick specimens in good condition and take the entire mushroom (stalk and cap), to facilitate identification;
- avoid picking mushrooms near polluted sites (roadsides, industrial zones, landfills);
- carefully separate the harvested mushrooms according to species, to avoid mixing pieces of poisonous fungi with edible mushrooms;
- place the mushrooms separately in a box or crate, and never in a plastic bag, which accelerates their decomposition;
- wash your hands thoroughly after picking;
- store the mushrooms separately in suitable conditions in the refrigerator, and consume within no more than two days of picking;
- cook the mushrooms thoroughly before consumption of a reasonable quantity, and never eat them raw;
- never offer the wild mushrooms you have picked to young children.
A valuable reflex is to take photos of your mushrooms before cooking! In the event of poisoning, the photo may help the pharmacist or doctor at the poison control centre decide on suitable treatment.

If one or more symptoms should appear (mainly diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea, trembling, dizziness, vision problems, etc.) following consumption of wild mushrooms:

immediately dial "15" (in France) or call the Poison Control Centre in your region, and explain that you have eaten mushrooms.

Symptoms generally start to appear within 12 hours of consumption, and the condition of the patient may deteriorate rapidly.

In the event of symptoms, it is useful to note the times of the last meals and of the onset of the first symptoms, and to keep any leftover wild mushrooms for identification.

Following the transfer of coordination of the toxicovigilance scheme to ANSES in January 2016, the Agency now performs seasonal monitoring of mushroom poisoning using data from the poison control centres.

Useful links:

- French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety
- Ministry of Solidarity and Health
- French Mycological Society
- Association of French Poison Control and Monitoring Centres

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