

Paris, 25 September 2020

## **The mushroom foraging season is here: stay alert to the risk of poisoning!**

**Early autumn marks the beginning of the wild mushroom picking season. Every year, numerous cases of poisoning caused by mushrooms are reported to poison control centres. This type of poisoning can have serious health consequences leading to hospitalisation or even death: severe digestive disorders, kidney complications or liver damage requiring a transplant. Whether you are a connoisseur or an occasional picker, you must therefore remain vigilant and comply with good practices to ensure safe consumption.**

Consumers face multiple poisoning risks such as confusion of an edible species with a toxic species, or consumption of edible mushrooms that are in poor condition or undercooked. In 2019, more than 2,000 poisoning cases were reported to poison control centres between 1 July and 31 December. These occurred mainly in October (57% of cases), when weather conditions combining rainfall, humidity and cooler temperatures favoured wild mushroom growth and picking.

The majority of poisoning cases concerned foraged mushrooms, but in some cases they followed purchase at a market or in a shop, or consumption in a restaurant (4%). While most of the patients were poisoned during a meal, in 3% of cases a piece of inedible mushroom had been eaten by a young child or an adult with a cognitive disorder (Alzheimer's disease, intellectual disability, etc.). In a few cases, confusion between species had been facilitated by the use of fungi recognition apps on smartphones, which had incorrectly identified the foraged mushrooms.

The symptoms observed were mainly digestive: abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. While most of these poisonings were minor, there were 24 cases of high severity with life-threatening prognosis, and three deaths.

In response to this situation, which is repeated every year, ANSES, the poison control centres and the Directorate General for Health offer the following recommendations:

- Only pick mushrooms that you know very well: some highly poisonous fungi closely resemble edible species. Beware! Poisonous fungi can grow in the same place that you picked edible mushrooms the previous year.
- 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. 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 potentially polluted sites such as roadsides, industrial zones and landfills.
- Carefully separate the foraged mushrooms according to species, to avoid mixing pieces of poisonous fungi with edible mushrooms.
- Place the mushroom species separately in a box, crate or basket and never in a plastic bag, which

accelerates their decomposition.

- Store the mushrooms in the refrigerator (max. 4°C) while avoiding contact with other foods, and eat them within two days of picking.
- Consume in reasonable quantities after cooking them thoroughly, and never eat wild mushrooms raw.
- Never feed the mushrooms you have picked to young children.
- Do not consume mushrooms identified by a fungi recognition app on a smartphone, due to the high risk of error.
- Do not consume mushrooms sold by non-professional street vendors.

**A valuable reflex is to take photos of your mushrooms before cooking, making sure to separate them according to species! In the event of poisoning, the photos will help the toxicologist at the poison control centre decide on suitable treatment.**

**In the event of a life-threatening condition (loss of consciousness, respiratory distress, etc.) dial 15 (in France) or 112.**

**If symptoms (diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea, trembling, dizziness, vision problems, etc.) develop after eating mushrooms, call a poison control centre immediately and mention this consumption.**

**Poison control centre numbers:**

ANGERS	+33 (0)2 41 48 21 21	MARSEILLE	+33 (0)4 91 75 25 25
BORDEAUX	+33 (0)5 56 96 40 80	NANCY	+33 (0)3 83 22 50 50
LILLE	+33 (0)8 00 59 59 59	PARIS	+33 (0)1 40 05 48 48
LYON	+33 (0)4 72 11 69 11	TOULOUSE	+33 (0)5 61 77 74 47

The time to onset of symptoms varies. It is usually within a few hours of consumption, but may be longer and exceed 12 hours. The patient's condition can then worsen rapidly.

If symptoms do occur, 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.

*ANSES conducts seasonal monitoring of poisonings due to wild mushrooms using data from the poison control centres.*

**Useful links:**

French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety:  
<https://www.anses.fr/fr/system/files/InfographieChampignons.pdf>

Ministry of Solidarity and Health: <https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/sante-et-environnement/denrees-alimentaires/article/prevention-des-intoxications-par-les-champignons>

French Mycological Society: [www.mycofrance.org](http://www.mycofrance.org)

Poison Control and Monitoring Centres: [www.centres-antipoison.net](http://www.centres-antipoison.net)

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