

VareseNews

Sixty-five cases of mushroom poisoning in three months

Pubblicato: Sabato 27 Ottobre 2012

✘ Also this year, in August, the Mycology Department of the Local Health Authority opened, with offices in four towns (Varese, Gallarate, Luino, Tradate).

Mycologists examine the mushrooms gathered by private individuals and traders, free of charge, and they issue a copy of their findings concerning whether or not they are edible.

On the request of hospital emergency departments, **an immediate, day and night service** has also begun, to enable intervention **in cases of suspected mushroom poisoning**, to allow identification of the species of mushroom that caused the poisoning, and enable an adequate therapy to be administered.

The initial data show that the department was called **25 times by emergency departments**, for poisoning incidents that involved **65 people**. **There were 3 episodes in which children under the age of 2 years had suffered accidental poisoning** (raw mushrooms found in the garden and eaten), and one episode of **Pantherina Syndrome** in an adult (caused by Amanita Pantherina), which is characterized by disturbances of the central nervous system.

Two hundred people have visited the Mycology Department, **and 30% of the mushrooms examined were immediately eliminated because they were inedible**. During the year, none of the patients treated in good time at emergency departments have reported irreversible consequences to their health, but in 2010, there was one case of acute liver failure, which required a liver transplant. We should remind readers that all of the cases of food poisoning recorded in the last few years in this area, were caused by the consumption of mushrooms gathered by private individuals and cooked at home. Therefore, we recommend not eating mushrooms if you are not absolutely sure that they are edible, and in case of doubt, seeking the opinion of the mycologists. As the **danger** is not linked only to the toxicity of some species but also to **inappropriate cooking methods**, the mycologists also give advice on how to handle some kinds of mushroom. Finally, anyone that is particularly vulnerable because of their age (**children and the elderly**), **people with diseases and pregnant women** should avoid eating mushrooms.

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