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Edible and poisonous mushrooms of Pakistan

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A large number of mushroom species occur naturally in different ecological regions of Pakistan and these are collected and consumed by the people. There are many cases of mushroom poisoning on record in different countries of the world; therefore people do not indulge in the use of many mushroom species due to risk of mushroom poisoning. In order to avoid mushroom poisoning, species with distinct identifiable characters may be used for culinary purposes. There are no fixed rules by which one can differentiate between poisonous and edible species. It is possible only when one is quite familiar with the characters of different genera and species. Deadly poisonous and excellent edible species are the two extremes in mushrooms. Not many kinds are deadly and not many stand out as excellent edible species. The only safe approach is to know the different kinds just as we learn to distinguish between the different kinds of fruits and vegetables. Survey of different ecological zones of Pakistan showed a large number of species of mushrooms exists in the country. In the plains of Pakistan, mushrooms are seen usually during the rainy season on the manure heaps and other damp and humus containing places. In hilly tracts a large number of species are found in the forests containing various kinds of trees and the naturally growing species. In Pakistan, nineteen mushroom species are found edible, whereas five species are documented as poisonous mushrooms. A brief review of these mushrooms has been described. Mushroom poisoning and various responses to human beings by the poisonous mushrooms are described. Possible remedies, treatments and precautions have also been documented.

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