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Ethylene glycol blood test

This test measures the level of ethylene glycol in the blood.

Ethylene glycol is a type of alcohol found in automotive and household products. It does not have color or odor. It tastes sweet. Ethylene glycol is poisonous. People sometimes drink ethylene glycol by mistake or on purpose as a substitute for drinking alcohol or when attempting suicide.

How the Test is Performed

A blood sample is needed.

How to Prepare for the Test

No special preparation is needed.

How the Test will Feel

When the needle is inserted to draw blood, some people feel slight pain. Others feel a prick or stinging. Afterward, there may be some throbbing or a slight bruise. This soon goes away.

Why the Test is Performed

This test is ordered when a health care provider thinks someone has been poisoned by ethylene glycol. Suspected ethylene glycol poisoning, usually due to drinking it, is a medical emergency. Ethylene glycol can damage the brain, liver, kidneys, and lungs. The poisoning disturbs the body's chemistry and can lead to condition called metabolic acidosis. In severe cases, shock, organ failure, and death can result.

Normal Results

There should be no ethylene glycol present in the blood.

What Abnormal Results Mean

Abnormal results are a sign of possible ethylene glycol poisoning.

Risks

There is little risk in having your blood taken. Veins and arteries vary in size from one person to another, and from one side of the body to the other. Taking a blood sample from some people may be more difficult than from others.

Other risks associated with having blood drawn are slight, but may include:

- Excessive bleeding
- Fainting or feeling lightheaded
- Multiple punctures to locate veins
- Hematoma (blood accumulating under the skin)
- Infection (a slight risk any time the skin is broken)

References

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