



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Ethylene glycol blood test

URL of this page: //medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003564.htm

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

Bluth MH, Pincus MR, Abraham NZ. Toxicology and therapeutic drug monitoring. In: McPherson RA, Pincus MR, eds. *Henry's Clinical Diagnosis and Management by Laboratory Methods*. 24th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2022:chap 24.

Nelson ME. Toxic alcohols. In: Walls RM, ed. *Rosen's Emergency Medicine: Concepts and Clinical Practice*. 10th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2023:chap 136.

Review Date 2/13/2025

Updated by: Jacob Berman, MD, MPH, Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine, University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, WA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

Learn how to cite this page



A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider (www.urac.org). URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

Health Content
Provider
06/01/2028

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.



National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Institutes of Health