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Cologne poisoning

Cologne is a scented liquid made from alcohol and essential oils. Cologne poisoning occurs when someone swallows cologne. This can be by accident or on purpose.

This article is for information only. DO NOT use it to treat or manage an actual poison exposure. If you or someone you are with has an exposure, call the local emergency number (such as 911), or the local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States.

Poisonous Ingredient

These ingredients in cologne can be poisonous:

- Ethyl alcohol (ethanol)
- Isopropyl alcohol (isopropanol)

There may be other poisonous ingredients in cologne.

Where Found

These alcohols are found in various types of cologne.

Symptoms

Symptoms of poisoning from cologne may include:

- Abdominal pain
- Anxiety
- Decreased level of consciousness, including coma (lack of responsiveness)
- Diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting (may be bloody)
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Trouble walking normally
- Low body temperature, low blood sugar, and low blood pressure
- Too little or too much urine output

- Rapid heart rate
- Seizures (convulsions)
- Slowed breathing
- Slurred speech
- Stupor
- Swaying from side to side
- Throat pain
- Uncoordinated movement

Children are especially prone to developing low blood sugar. Symptoms of low blood sugar can include:

- Confusion
- Irritability
- Nausea
- Sleepiness
- Weakness

Home Care

Seek medical help right away. Do not make the person throw up unless poison control or a health care provider tells you to.

Before Calling Emergency

Have this information ready:

- Person's age, weight, and condition
- Name of the product
- Time it was swallowed
- Amount swallowed

Poison Control

Your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States. This national hotline number will let you talk to experts in poisoning. They will give you further instructions.

This is a free and confidential service. All local poison control centers in the United States use this national number. You should call if you have any questions about poisoning or poison prevention. It does NOT need to be an emergency. You can call for any reason, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What to Expect at the Emergency Room

Bring the container with you to the hospital, if possible.

The provider will measure and monitor the person's vital signs, including temperature, pulse, breathing rate, and blood pressure. Symptoms will be treated.

The person may receive:

- Blood and urine tests
- Breathing support, including tube through the mouth into the lungs and breathing machine (ventilator)
- ECG (electrocardiogram, or heart tracing)
- Chest x-ray
- Endoscopy -- camera placed down the throat to see burns in the esophagus and the stomach, if vomiting blood
- Fluids through a vein (by IV)
- Laxative
- Medicine to treat symptoms
- Tube through the nose into the stomach if vomiting blood

Outlook (Prognosis)

How well someone does depends on the amount of cologne swallowed and how quickly treatment is received. The faster medical help is given, the better the chance for recovery.

Cologne poisoning may make a person appear as if they are drunk. It can also cause severe breathing problems, seizures, and coma. A product with a lot of isopropyl alcohol could cause a more serious illness.

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