

# Antifreeze

Get the Facts! From the Blue Ridge Poison Center at UVA Health

Antifreeze is a liquid added to the water in an automobile's radiator to prevent freezing or overheating. It is also known as engine coolant. Antifreeze itself is clear and colorless. Manufacturers put dye into their product to help identify it and to help trace the source of leaks. Many antifreeze products contain *ethylene glycol*, a form of toxic alcohol which reportedly tastes sweet. Ethylene glycol is poisonous if swallowed.



## What is the problem?

The picture above on the left shows antifreeze being poured into a car's radiator. The picture above right is a sports beverage. Both liquids are the same color blue. It would be easy for someone to make a mistake and drink antifreeze, particularly if it was poured into a glass or another type of drink container. Children, pets, and wildlife may be attracted to antifreeze because it smells and tastes sweet.

Even small amounts can cause life-threatening health effects. Symptoms of antifreeze poisoning may not appear for many hours. Early symptoms include feeling intoxicated, difficulty speaking or moving, headache, grogginess, nausea, and vomiting. Later, as the body continues to break down the antifreeze, symptoms may include dangerous changes in heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. If left untreated, kidney failure, coma, and death could result.



Children, pets, and wildlife are attracted to the sweet taste of antifreeze.

## How Can You Protect Yourself and Others?

- Clean up antifreeze spills immediately.
- Store antifreeze in clearly marked containers up high, out of the sight and reach of children.
- Take used or leftover antifreeze to an auto shop or hazardous waste disposal facility. Never pour it down a drain, flush it, or dump it. Not only is this dangerous to people, pets, and wildlife, it is illegal.
- If you suspect someone has swallowed any amount of antifreeze, call the Blue Ridge Poison Center right away. Do not wait to see if symptoms develop. 1-800-222-1222.