

# METHANOL CLINICAL ALERT

Information for Emergency Departments, Ambulance Service, Intensive Care Units, Clinical Toxicology Units and Drug and Alcohol Services

1. NSW Health recommends a high index of suspicion for methanol poisoning in people who report ingestion of methylated spirits.
2. All patients with a history of methylated spirits ingestion should be asked about visual disturbances and have blood gases, electrolytes, measured serum osmolality and blood ethanol levels performed.
3. Contact the Poisons Information Centre (13 11 26) for clinical advice and support. Report patients identified with methanol poisoning to your local public health unit on 1300 066 055.

## Background

In Australia methylated spirits normally contains denatured alcohol and does not contain any significant concentration of methanol. **However, In late January there was a case in NSW of methanol toxicity which was associated with consumption of methylated spirits which on testing was found to contain >60% methanol.** This case and the source of methanol are being actively investigated.

## Case management

- Ingestion of as little as 10mL of 60% methanol can cause major toxicity and death.
- Patients presenting with a history of methylated spirits ingestion should be asked about visual disturbances and have blood gases, electrolytes, measured serum osmolality and blood ethanol levels performed. Either visual disturbance or a raised anion gap metabolic acidosis or an osmolar gap of greater than 10 mOsmol is suggestive of methanol exposure.
- Please contact the NSW Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 for clinical advice and support.

## Notification

Report patients identified with methanol poisoning to your local public health unit on 1300 066 055.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kerry Chant PSM

Chief Health Officer and Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health

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