

Lye Water

Warning: Lye Water can cause serious injuries

What is Lye Water?

Lye Water (sometimes called “Lime Water”) is caustic or corrosive liquid, which means it can corrode or ‘eat away’ solid objects. It is also a poison.

If it is used in the wrong way, it can injure people or make people sick.

Lye Water is used in many different ways by different groups of people. It tends to be used:

- to soften food or add flavour when cooking meat, fish, rice, noodles and/or vegetables like corn, beans, maize or okra
- for baking
- to make soap
- to straighten hair.



Two types of Lye water sold in Australia.

Why might Lye Water be dangerous to health?

! **If swallowed** straight from the bottle, Lye Water can badly burn your mouth, throat and stomach, or poison you.

+ If swallowed, immediately

! **If splashed into your eyes or onto skin**, Lye Water can burn, make you blind or cause other permanent damage.

+ If splashed into your eyes, rinse your eyes under running water from the tap straight away and for at least 30 minutes, even if the pain stops earlier.

If splashed onto your skin, rinse under running water.



Call 000

and ask for an ambulance.

(It is best to use a land-line phone, but if you need to use a mobile, call 112)

What do I need to know about Lye Water?

1. Lye Water sold in Australia might be stronger than the Lye Water used in cooking in Africa and other countries. In Australia from 1st September 2010 the pH is limited to 11.5.
2. It is okay to use Lye Water for cooking if you are *very careful and store it safely*.
3. **Lye Water is not recommended for straightening hair.**
4. If you (or a child) drink undiluted Lye Water (straight from the bottle), it can badly burn your mouth, throat and stomach, and/or make you sick. If Lye Water is splashed onto your skin it can badly burn you. If it is splashed into your eyes, it can hurt your eyes and might make you blind.

Keeping children safe from Lye Water

Lye Water bottles

- ! Lye Water is often sold in bottles that look like soft drink bottles, even though Lye Water can be dangerous. Children might think Lye Water is a soft drink, and drink it.
- ! Lye Water bottles have special lids to make it harder for children to open them. This might not stop them, but will slow them down, giving you time to take the bottle away before they open it!



Make sure the same lid is always put back on tightly!

How to safely store Lye Water

- ✓ Keep Lye Water where children cannot reach the bottle.
- ✓ Keep Lye Water in the original bottle.
- ✓ Make sure the same lid is always put back on tightly after you've used a bottle of Lye Water.
- ✓ Only adults should open Lye Bottles, and only when needed. Open the bottle by squeezing or pushing down on the cap.
- ✗ Don't store Lye Water where children can reach the bottle. Children can climb to reach cupboards or on top of the fridge.
- ✗ Don't pour Lye Water into another bottle or container.

Safe use of Lye Water

- ✓ If you choose to use Lye Water, open the bottle only when you need it, close it well and put the bottle out of reach of children straight after using it.
- ✓ Read the label on the bottle to find out how much Lye Water to use. It might be a stronger mix than you are used to.
- ✗ Do not measure Lye Water into a cup or spoon, and then leave it on the bench where children can reach it. Use the Lye Water straight away then wash the cup or spoon.

How can I find out more?

For more information about Lye Water and other household chemicals contact the:

Poisons Information Centre on telephone: 13 11 26