Super Glue

Super glue and similar products are resins which bond rapidly in the presence of water to become strong adhesives. Because they bond so strongly and rapidly, accidents may occur where adhesive comes into contact with skin resulting in fingers glued together or skin glued to other objects. Sometimes the product has been mistaken for eye ointment or nasal drops due to similarities in packaging, and applied to the eyes or nose. It has also sometimes been accidentally introduced to the mouth.

If skin becomes bonded by super glue, soaking in or swabbing with warm soapy water is the best method to soften the glue. The addition of vinegar to this solution can also be of some benefit. When the glue has softened, a gentle rotating motion can be used to release the affected part. Pressure should be applied towards the bonded surface whilst gently rotating either the body part or the other item to gradually break the bond.

Nail polish remover has often been used to break down superglue. This may be effective but acetone (nail polish remover) or other solvents should not be used on sensitive skin or near open wounds. Use the following suggestions if the glue is on a part of the body where acetone should not be applied, such as the lips, eyes, nose or other sensitive areas.

- If skin is glued, try gently peeling the skin apart as you would removing a bandage
- If already firmly bonded, bathe repeatedly or immerse areas in warm soapy water. Use a rotating motion to roll skin apart.

Seek medical attention if superglue is introduced to the eyes, mouth, nose, or ears especially for children.

Mouth or nose

- If glue gets in the mouth it cannot be accidentally swallowed as it hardens too quickly. Medical or dental attention should be sought if it is bonded to teeth or gums. Saliva will lift the adhesive in 1-2 days. If possible avoid swallowing glue plugs when they loosen.
- If in the mouth or nose, margarine can be applied. Repeated applications may soften the glue enough for it to be gently peeled away. If unsuccessful, seek medical assistance.

Eyes

- Immediately seek medical assistance if glue gets in the eyes. If possible, wash thoroughly with copious amounts of warm water for 15 minutes, holding eyes open and apply a moist gauze patch.

- If skin is glued together, force should not be used to pull the skin apart as the skin may tear.
- Acetone (nail polish remover) or other solvents should not be used on sensitive skin or near open wounds.
- Do not use acetone or soapy water if the product is in the eyes, nose or mouth.
- Super glue should not be used to glue together skin lacerations - if used in this way, medical advice should be sought promptly. Although there is such a product, super glue is not a safe substitute and may cause burning and infection of the wound.

In trying to separate bonded skin, a rotational motion is much more effective than pulling, which can tear the skin.

When using super glue, make sure the area is well ventilated; consider wearing safety glasses if there is a risk to eyes. Non-sticking vinyl gloves will protect hands if necessary.

The product is best stored below 25 C but should be allowed to reach room temperature before use.

Practical Advice

- If the glue is on a non-hazardous part of the body, it can be left and will peel off in 1-2 days with no ill effect.
- Glue vapours may irritate eyes and mucous membranes.
- Prolonged or repeated exposure to vapours at high levels may produce allergic reactions with asthma-like symptoms in sensitive individuals. Always use in a well ventilated area. If irritation occurs, remove to fresh air.
- Generally no long-term symptoms will be suffered once the person is removed from the source of vapours, although pre-existing skin, eye and respiratory disorders may be aggravated by exposure.


Superglue (Cyanoacrylate) in the Nose; Sham K. Duvvi, MS, Stephen Lo, BMEDSCI, MBA, MRCS, DLO, Ravi Kumar, MS, and Paul D. R. Spraggs, FRCS (ORL), London, United Kingdom, Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (2005) 133, 803-804.

Case of the month: Honey I glued the kids: tissue adhesives are not the same as "superglue" (http://emj.bmj.com/content/24/3/228) Luke Cascarini, Anand Kumar, Emergency Medicine Journal (http://emj.bmj.com/), 2007, 24:228-231.

Material Safety Data Sheet - Super Glue (http://supergluemsds.com/search.aspx)
Toxinz Poisons Information Database - New Zealand (http://www.toxinz.com/)