Super glue for cuts? [1]

Dear Alice,

How dangerous is it to use super glue for a cut?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Super glue is a cut above the rest when it comes to adhesives. From keeping large planks of wood together to restoring broken lamps, it?'s an incredibly versatile compound. Many people who have used it have probably gotten some on their fingers and noticed how well it serves as a ?second skin.? Though it has historically been used to bond skin together, the increased risk of infection makes it better for household repairs, not human skin repairs. Nowadays, if bandages aren?'t doing the trick, there?'s a tissue adhesive specifically meant for skin wounds which may be obtained from or applied by a health care provider.

Historically, super glue was used for medical purposes. During the Vietnam War, emergency medics would use super glue to seal wounds and stop bleeding. However, the typical run-of-the-mill super glue isn?'t intended for tissue repairs and may potentially lead to undesirable side effects. If it gets into the cut, super glue could interfere with healing, cause or aggravate an infection, cause an allergic or inflammatory reaction, or even cause toxicity in the blood.

Health care providers today use a special tissue adhesive as an alternative to stitches, particularly for cuts that are small and not too deep. Some dermatologists even maintain that tissue adhesive may lead to less scarring than stitches, not to mention, it?'s cheap, painless, and easy to come by. In fact, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved one with antibacterial properties called 2-octyl-cyanoacrylate. This tissue adhesive contains a compound called cyanoacrylate, which is also found in super glue. However, the long-chain formulation of cyanoacrylate in tissue adhesive is less likely to cause a histamine or inflammatory reaction when compared to the short-chain cyanoacrylate in regular super glue. Tissue adhesives are available with a prescription and typically applied by a health care provider.

So, while using super glue from the arts and crafts store may be convenient, it?'s a wise idea to stay safe and avoid using it for unintended purposes. Instead, to treat a cut, try applying a bandage or visiting a health care provider for stitches or tissue adhesive.
Hope this information sticks with you,

Alice!

Category:
General Health [2]
Aches, Pains & Other Ailments [3]
Skin Conditions [4]

Related questions

How do wounds, cuts, scrapes, lacerations heal? [5]
Aloe vera? What is it good for? [6]
Cut by rusty metal! Do I need a tetanus shot? [7]
Slower healing time? [8]

Resources

Medical Services (Morningside) [9]
Medical Services (CUMC) [10]

Published date:
Apr 27, 2012
Last reviewed on:
Nov 17, 2017

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.