Accidental ingestion of drain cleaner

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DESCRIPTION

A healthy man in his thirties experienced a ‘practical joke’ during a party when some friends exchanged his alcohol-containing drinking bottle with a potassium hydroxide cleaning agent. The agent, a drain cleaner, had a pH of 14 according to the producer. The unfortunate consumer managed to spit out most of the liquid after his first sip, but suffered severe etching ulcers on his lips, tongue and palate (figure 1).

He was in a car during the incident and was immediately transported to the hospital. Initially, his airways were secured with orotracheal intubation, but he was extubated the following day as there were no signs of gastric, pharyngeal or laryngeal injury. An antibiotic regimen of penicillin and metronidazole was given to prevent secondary bacterial infection. Also, a mikonazol/hydrocortisone (Dactacort, McNeil Consumer Pharmaceuticals, Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, USA) ointment for his lips and caphosol mouth rinse (EUSA Pharma, Hemel Hempstead, UK) was administered. He was discharged after 5 days with mild opiate analgesics.

The injury caused decreased tongue mobility due to scarring and subsequent difficulties in pronunciation of certain letters. Some improvement was achieved following 4 months of training with a speech pathologist. A minor surgical procedure to increase tongue mobility has been suggested, which the patient has decided to await thus far. He developed a mild opiate addiction. The relationship with my friends involved addictions to alcohol, cannabis, and I am happy to recover from my opiate addiction. The relationship with my friends involved moderate addictions to alcohol, cannabis, and I am happy to recover from my opiate addiction. The relationship with my friends involved moderate addictions to alcohol, cannabis, and I am happy to recover from my opiate addiction.

Learning points

- Ingestion of alkaline agents can cause severe injury to the oral mucosa.
- Care should be taken to keep drain cleaners away from children.