

# Glycerol

What consumers need to know about glycerol and slush ice drinks.

## Slush ice drinks containing glycerol

Slush ice drinks or 'slushies' can contain the ingredient glycerol (E 422) as a substitute for sugar, [this additive](#) is used at a levels required to create the 'slush' effect.

**Children aged under seven should not consume these drinks**, because they may cause side-effects, particularly when consumed in high levels, including:

- headaches and sickness
- hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar)
- shock
- loss of consciousness

Children aged under 10 should only have one 350ml slush ice drink with glycerol a day. That's about the same size as a can of fizzy drink, or a standard coffee.

Parents and guardians should check with the seller on whether the drink contains glycerol - don't buy if in doubt.

This advice also applies to ready-to-drink slush ice drinks with glycerol in pouches and home kits containing glycerol in the slush concentrates. The presence of glycerol should be reflected on the label or contact the manufacturer for further information.

## What is glycerol

Glycerol (E422) is a key ingredient used often in slush ice drinks. It maintains the slush properties to stop the drink freezing solid.

Although glycerol is generally of low toxicity, there are concerns about the effect on young children when large quantities are consumed over a short period of time.

## What to do if a child becomes unwell after drinking a slush ice drink

If a child becomes unwell with headaches, nausea or vomiting soon after consuming slush ice drinks, you should immediately give them drinks or food containing sugar and call 111 for medical advice. If a child becomes drowsy or confused, you should call 999 for urgent medical attention.

## Working with industry

The FSA has issued guidelines for manufacturers on these drinks to encourage them to formulate their products using the minimum quantity of glycerol needed to get the required 'slush' drink effect.

[Manufacturers and retailers are also being advised that the sales of slush ice drinks containing glycerol should be accompanied by a written warning visible at point of sale](#) - "Product contains glycerol. Should not be consumed by children under seven years of age and children under 10 should have a maximum of one 350ml drink per day."

PDF

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## **How we make sure food additives are safe**

Additives must be assessed for safety before they can be used in food. We also ensure that:

- the science on additives is strictly reviewed
- the law is strictly enforced
- action is taken where problems are found

We investigate any information that casts reasonable doubt on the safety of an additive.