

Glycerine: Not Just A Skin Softener

If you are fond of making your own soap either for personal or household use or to give homemade soaps as a birthday present then it is very likely that you are familiar with glycerine. It is a clear, odorless, viscous and sweet-tasting substance that tends to attract moisture to the skin. Thus, it is commonly used in making soaps and body lotions. This moisturizing substance is a by-product of biodiesel production. It is also obtained from fats and oils during soap production. It is not hard to obtain these days. But did you know that more than a hundred years ago, its sole source was commercial candle making? Candles at that time were actually made from animal fats. Moreover, the substance dissolves easily into alcohol and water, but not into oils. On the other hand, many substances will dissolve into this sweet chemical substance rather easier than they do into water and alcohol. Hence, it makes a good solvent. It is also hygroscopic, which means that it absorbs water from the air easily. For instance, if you leave a bottle of pure glycerine uncapped, it becomes 20% water and 80% glycerine as the substance would absorb water from the air.

As mentioned, the substance makes a good skin moisturizer. Thus, those who have skin problems such as eczema can find help from it. But, while it is better known as an ingredient in making soap or a moisturizing agent, for that matter, it has other practical uses. For instance, you can use it to remove those spilled sticky food stuck in your freezer. Besides soap, there are several other household products where the substance is a component of. These include body lotions, deodorants, pre-shaving creams, mouthwashes, and toothpaste. It is added to toothpaste as a sweetener as well as to prevent the paste from drying when its container is left open.

Other than being used in the production of personal care products, glycerine has medical value as well. One is that it helps relieve congested nasal passages. What you can do is rub a few drops of a solution of glycerine and water just inside the nostrils. Other than that, it is used as a mild laxative and it tends to double healing speed and cut scarring in half. Furthermore, it is used in the production of various drugs such as ear infection remedies, cough remedies, capsules, suppositories, and anesthetics.

Other industries that benefit from the substance include the tobacco industry where it is of use to add flavor to the chewing tobacco and in the production of cigarette filter tips. The textile industry, on the other hand, makes use of it to lubricate different kinds of fiber. It is also used to make rubber and plastic more flexible and to manufacture resin coating.

And, while it is being used to sweeten and preserve food and drinks such as cakes, candies, dry food, and soft drinks, it is also used to manufacture nitroglycerine, an essential component in making dynamite.

Glycerine truly is more than just a skin moisturizer. Its value does not end in making your own inexpensive soaps. It is used by various manufacturing industries. It is even known to have more than 1,500 uses. Also, while it has so many uses, it is safe to use. Under typical storage conditions, it is highly stable and it is compatible with many other chemical substances. And, more importantly, it does not have negative effects to the environment. This substance indeed stays true to where its name comes from, that is, “glykys”, a Greek word that means sweet. There is no doubt that it is one sweet, useful substance.