In 2013, a 70-year-old female ingested some contents of a re-used iced tea bottle that contained paraquat, unknown to her. She went to the hospital awake and alert with persistent vomiting. Over the course of a 16-day admission, she evolved the classic picture of paraquat ingestion: corrosive gastrointestinal injury plus kidney and respiratory failure leading to death.

In 2003, a 49-year-old male took a sip from his coffee cup in which he had poured paraquat because the product's bottle was deteriorating. He realized his mistake and went to the hospital's emergency department. At that time, he was vomiting, cold and sweating profusely. Doses of activated charcoal were administered and his stomach was pumped; morphine was provided for fast heart rate, injury to the heart; liver failure; lung scarring; muscle weakness; pulmonary edema; respiratory failure possibly leading to death; seizures.

Since 2000, there have been 19 DEATHS, including 3 children, caused by accidental ingestion of paraquat. These cases resulted from the pesticide being illegally transferred to beverage containers and later mistaken for a drink and consumed.

Product labels have prominently placed statements including “NEVER PUT INTO FOOD, DRINK OR OTHER CONTAINERS” and “DO NOT REMOVE CONTENTS EXCEPT FOR IMMEDIATE USE.” However, product labeling may not be accessible to health care providers and the initial clinical presentation depends on the route of exposure which may be not immediately known. Certified pesticide applicators who may use paraquat include crop-dusters, farm laborers, public land managers, and foresters. Health care providers may consider advising such patients to never transfer pesticides into food/beverage containers. Remember that pesticide exposure/poisoning is a reportable condition in many states.

Paraquat should never be put in unmarked containers or used at home.