How can you make rainbow colors out of clear nail polish?

Materials

- 4 cups or glasses (ones that you can see through are best)
- Effervescent antacid tablets
- Water
- Food coloring

Time

- Preparation: 5 minutes
- Activity: 5 minutes
- Cleanup: 5 minutes

Safety

Do not eat or drink any of the materials in this activity. The antacid tablets contain medication. Supervise children at all times.

Description

In this activity, kids explore the chemical reaction between water and effervescent antacid tablets.

Suitable for kids of all ages.

Which fizzes faster—big pieces or little pieces?
Step 1
Fill two of the cups halfway with water. Put the same amount of water in each cup.
Add a drop of food coloring to each cup.

Step 2
Remove two antacid tablets from their wrapper.
Drop one into one of the empty cups.
Crush or break the other tablet into many small pieces, and put it in the other empty cup.

Step 3
At the same time, pour the colored water into both of the cups containing the antacid.
Which fizzes up faster, the whole tablet or the tablet you broke into lots of pieces?
What’s going on?
The crushed tablet fizzes faster than the whole tablet. That’s because it has a greater surface area to volume ratio.

For the same amount of antacid, the crushed tablet has more surface—or exterior—to react with the water. Because the water can reach more of the antacid immediately, the chemical reaction (fizzing) happens faster.

How is this nano?
A material can act differently when it’s nano-sized. A nanometer is a billionth of a meter.

Things on the nanoscale have a lot of surface area, so they react much more easily and quickly than they would if they were larger.

For example, nano-sized particles of aluminum are explosive. Good thing regular-sized aluminum doesn’t explode, or it would be dangerous to drink soda pop!

Surface area
Nanotechnology takes advantage of the way things behave differently at the nanoscale to make new products and applications.

For example, an extra-sticky glue can be made from tiny starch molecules that are only 100 nanometers in size. This eco-friendly adhesive is used to stick graphics onto cardboard packaging.
Learn more at:
www.whatisnano.org

This project was supported by the National Science Foundation under Award No. ESI-0532536. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.

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