Activated Charcoal

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1. Point 1: Activated charcoal decreases the absorption of poisons from the GI tract.
2. Point 2: Activated charcoal can cause life-threatening inflammation of the lungs if it goes down the wrong tube.
3. Point 3: Activated charcoal is the most commonly used method of GI decontamination. There are other methods, gastric lavage, whole bowel irrigation (Derlet and Albertson 1986).

Activated charcoal prevents the absorption of poisons from the GI tract.

- If solids doesn't work for liquids. Exception metal, exception to exception: thallium.
- Works in children and adults.
- Phase of matter matters.
- Body doesn't absorb it, not a preventative measure – only works if the poison is in the GI tract.
- MDAC (talk to a toxicologist)
- Dose: 1g/kg (50-100g), relates to amount of poison ingested.
- Most useful for likely fatal ingestions, recent, no antidote. (Colchicine)

Activated charcoal can cause life-threatening inflammation of the lungs if it goes down the wrong tube.

- Give it to a patient who is awake and alert and can swallow.

Activated charcoal is the most commonly used method of GI decontamination.

- Other methods: gastric lavage, whole bowel irrigation.
- Gastric lavage: not used as much, can cause complications. Irritates the esophagus, doing it properly requires a sedated patient.
- Whole bowel irrigation: used for drug packets, iron, lithium, sustained release drugs.
- Don't induce vomiting. Don't try to prevent yourself from throwing up after ingestion. If you are awake and your body thinks you should throw up, let it.
- Don't "neutralize" the poison with milk. Doesn't inactivate the active compound (unless ingested solid acid)

Derlet, Robert W, and Timothy E Albertson. 1986. "Activated Charcoal—Past, Present and Future." *Western Journal of Medicine* 145 (4): 493.