Activated Charcoal

Michael Chary

2024-01-30

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.[[1]](#footnote-20)

#### 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)

1. {% cite derlet1986activated –file not-my-works -s apa %}. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)