

Activated charcoal is a supplement that is sold over-the-counter to treat several conditions including excess gas, high cholesterol, and preventing hangovers. Medicinal activated charcoal is also used in emergency medicine to treat certain types of poisoning. [Activated charcoal](#) is designed for medicinal use, and is not the same as the charcoal that is used in products that remove pet odors and in fish tank filters. Activated charcoal works to treat poisoning because it binds with some poisonous agents and helps them pass through the body without being absorbed. When activated charcoal is prescribed by a physician in this way it may be taken in several doses. However, as a supplement, activated charcoal has not been shown to be effective in treating other conditions such as excess gas, cholesterol or hangovers. The side effects from activated charcoal include constipation and black stools. Activated charcoal may also prevent some drugs from being absorbed by the body, therefore it should not be taken at the same time as other medications.

[Activated charcoal](#) is a piece of carbon that is processed with oxygen in order to make it very porous. This causes it to become highly absorbent. There are many uses for activated charcoal.

#### Medical Uses

1. Activated charcoal is used medically to treat poisoning or overdose, to relieve pain from diarrhea, indigestion or gas and to relieve dialysis-related itching. Possible side effects when ingesting [activated charcoal](#) are vomiting, constipation, diarrhea or painful swelling in the stomach. Allergic reactions are possible also. Symptoms include chest pain, rash, itchy swollen skin and breathing problems.

#### Household Uses

2. Activated charcoal absorbs odors quickly and a small amount can service a large area. It is also used in water and air filters and in fish tank filter systems.

#### Other Uses

3. Activated charcoal is also used agriculturally. It will absorb pesticides and deactivate them upon absorption.

#### Making Activated Charcoal

4. Activated charcoal is made by heating organic materials such as wood without the presence of air. Mass quantities of activated charcoal are produced in Madagascar. Charcoal making dates back to prehistoric times.

#### Purchasing

5. Activated charcoal can be purchased in most health food stores, pharmacies and farm supply stores.