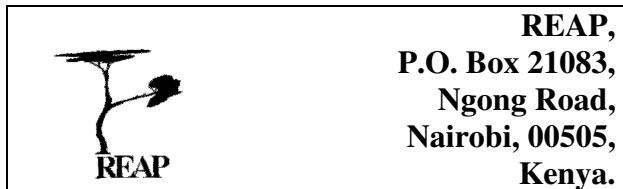


How does it work?

Activated charcoal is a traditional remedy for treating excess stomach and intestinal gas.

It works by attracting excess gas in the stomach and bowels, which binds to the surface of the charcoal powder. This relieves the discomfort caused by excess gas (flatulence), wind, indigestion and heartburn. The charcoal is not absorbed from the gut. It is passed out in the stool.



MEDICINAL CHARCOAL

A very useful and simple medication for simple and common stomach complaints can be made from groundnut shells that are roasted over a fire until they become blackened as charcoal.



Materials Needed

The charcoal is made by heating groundnut shells and then grinding them. The following equipment will therefore be needed:

- Dried and clean groundnut shells
- A fire or stove
- A pan with a lid for roasting the shells
- A wooden spoon
- A grinding stone or pestle and mortar
- A sieve
- Jars or tins for storing the charcoal powder

Making the Charcoal

1. You need to use dry and clean groundnut shells.
2. Roast the shells in a pan. Cover with a lid to keep the air out for about five minutes. Open the pan and continue roasting until the shells turn black and become charcoal. They are ready when the offensive smoke calms down.

Take care that they do not catch fire while you are roasting them.

Take the pan off the fire and pour the blackened shells into another container to cool for about five minutes.

When the charcoal pieces are cool, grind them into powder. Use either a grinding stone or a pestle and mortar, whichever is easier and most appropriate in the local community. Grind them until they become a fine powder.



Sieve the powder in the same way that you sieve flour, in a place protected from the wind as the powder is very light.

Put the sieved powder back in the pan and heat it over the fire to sterilise it. Be very careful at this stage as it can easily catch fire.

Pour the sterilised powder into tins or jars for storage. Keep it airtight.

Using the Charcoal

This charcoal can be stored in the container until it is needed. It is used for wind, bad breath, mild food poisoning and diarrhoea. It is a very safe medicine to use as it has no known side effects.

Add one tablespoon of the powder to a glass of water and stir. It will not dissolve, but when it gets wet it is suspended in the water. Drink the water with the powder, stirring as you do so to keep the powder in suspension.

One tablespoon of the powder should be taken three times a day for upset stomachs, bad breath and wind.

Do not use it for children under 12 years old. For children it is more important to use oral rehydration.

The charcoal can also absorb the chemicals in medicine, so do not use this remedy when you are on prescription medicine without first consulting the doctor.

You can also make this medicine by grinding charcoal from a tree that is neither poisonous nor resinous (i.e. with no sticky sap). Charcoal made from Mango wood is particularly good for this. You may like to use the branches that grow in the centre of a mango tree because these branches will never bear fruit.