

Words on Wellness

Your extension connection to nutrition and fitness

Will Activated Charcoal Activate your Health?

Take a look around your local health market shelves or smoothie bar menu and you may notice products containing activated charcoal (also called activated carbon). Before you jump to try this latest fad, take a moment to understand what this product is, its intended uses, and health implications.

Activated charcoal is not found naturally in foods. It is made when coal, wood, or other substances are placed under high heat with a gas or an activating agent to expand the surface area. Activated charcoal has been used by medical professionals to manage poisonings and overdoses.

There are several other activated charcoal health claims that are far less studied include the following:

- treating cholestasis (a condition of pregnancy affecting normal bile flow)
- reducing high cholesterol
- preventing a hangover
- preventing gas (flatulence)

There is limited scientific evidence to support the use of activated charcoal as treatment for these conditions.

Activated charcoal is often marketed as a way to detox and eliminate harmful toxins from our bodies. Although the use of activated charcoal may be warranted in the case of poisonings or overdoses, general detoxification is done by our bodies naturally with the help of our kidneys and liver. Additionally, activated charcoal can absorb food nutrients, vitamins, and minerals that our bodies need. It is also important to remember that the Federal Drug Administration does not regulate the sale of dietary supplements, including activated charcoal.

Side effects are more likely when activated charcoal is used on a long-term basis; these include black stools, black tongue, vomiting or diarrhea, and constipation. Activated charcoal can also react with certain medications you may be taking. Always talk with your doctor before you begin taking any supplement, including activated charcoal.

The bottom line is that further research needs to be done to determine how effective activated charcoal is for the treatment of various conditions and what doses should be used.

Sources/more information: <http://www.webmd.com/vitamins-and-supplements/activated-charcoal-uses-risks>

<http://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/wellness/?s=cleanse>



Beef and Vegetable Stir Fry

Serving Size: 1 1/2 cups stir fry, 2/3 cup instant brown rice | Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 cup low sodium soy sauce
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 pound lean beef or pork, sliced thinly
- 2 cups uncooked instant brown rice
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 7 cups chopped vegetables or 24 ounces frozen stir fry vegetables, thawed
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

Preparations:

1. Create ginger mixture by mixing ginger, garlic powder, soy sauce, and water. Pour 1/4 cup of the mix into a sealable plastic bag and save the rest. Add meat to the bag. Seal the bag and set it in the refrigerator for about 20 minutes.
2. Prepare brown rice according to directions on the package for 4 servings.
3. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large frying pan. When oil is hot, add meat from plastic bag and stir until brown. This will take 1 to 3 minutes. Discard liquid from the bag.
4. Remove meat from pan and cover it. Add 1 tablespoon oil to pan.
5. Add chopped vegetables. Stir and cook until tender, about 5 minutes.
6. Add cornstarch to the saved ginger mixture and stir until smooth.
7. Return meat to the pan when vegetables are tender. Add cornstarch mixture and cook for about 2 minutes until bubbly.
8. Serve over brown rice.

Nutrition information per serving:

470 calories, 13 g total fat, 2 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 50 mg cholesterol, 610 mg sodium, 60 g total carbohydrate, 6 g fiber, 5 g sugar, 27 g protein

Source: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings/recipes/beef-and-vegetable-stir-fry>

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Making the Cut

Which is better at preventing a foodborne illness outbreak—a wooden or plastic cutting board? This is a long-standing food safety question. Some research suggests wood is a better option, because the pores in the wood can trap and immobilize bacteria, which then die. Other studies, however, suggest bacteria absorbed in wooden boards can in fact survive and could possibly multiply and recontaminate the surface in the future, making plastic seem superior.

The take-away message is that all cutting boards, plastic or wooden, can be sources of contamination. To help prevent contamination, your cutting board needs to be clean and in good condition.

1. After each use, scrub your cutting board in hot, soapy water, then rinse and allow to air dry.
2. Using the dishwasher to clean plastic and solid wooden boards is fine, but laminated boards can crack in the dishwasher.
3. Wooden and plastic cutting boards can be disinfected with a bleach solution (1 tablespoon traditional regular chlorine bleach [6% sodium hypochlorite] per gallon of water or 2 teaspoons concentrated bleach per gallon of water). Pour solution over the surface and let sit for at least one minute; then rinse well and air dry.
4. It is time to get a new cutting board if your board has cracks, crevices, chips, or grooves where bacteria can hide.
5. Designate one cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood, and another for vegetables, fruits, breads, and other ready-to-eat foods to avoid cross-contamination.

For more information, visit the Iowa Food Safety website: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety/>

Sources: University of California, Berkley Wellness Letter (December 2014) Food Safety Tips for Food Event Volunteers SP 452: <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/Food-Safety-Tips-for-Food-Event-Volunteers>

Top Fitness Trend for 2015—Getting Back to the Basics

The American College of Sports Medicine has named bodyweight training as the top fitness trend for 2015. Dr. Walter Thompson states, “These kinds of exercises provide the benefit of requiring little to no equipment and are incorporated into many fitness programs that are currently popular.”



Bodyweight training involves exercises where the body is used as resistance. This type of training uses little equipment, making it a very affordable option! Below are some bodyweight training exercises you can try at home. Click on the highlighted ones for instructional videos or visit http://www.acefitness.org/acefit/fitness_programs_exercise_library_list.aspx?equipment=10.

Push-up, Plank, Pull-up, Squat, Single leg stand, Wall sit, Mountain climber

Sources: <http://www.acsm.org/about-acsm/media-room/news-releases/2014/10/24/survey-predicts-top-20-fitness-trends-for-2015>

http://journals.lww.com/acsm-healthfitness/Fulltext/2014/11000/WORLDWIDE_SURVEY_OF_FITNESS_TRENDS_FOR_2015_.5.aspx

<http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/tipsandtricks/a/basictraining.htm>

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