

Quick Tips – From the ER

Rethinking Charcoal

While decontamination remains at the forefront of therapy for toxic ingestions, there are reasons to avoid charcoal administration or decrease the amount given. We must keep in mind the old adage, “Above all, do no harm.”

The following toxin ingestions do not respond to charcoal administration: Heavy metals, xylitol, caustics, and hydrocarbons. Remember, however that charcoal administration may be beneficial even for toxins that are rapidly absorbed, such as NSAIDs, due to its ability to break enterohepatic recirculation.

Recently, the ASPCA Poison Control has received reports of neurologic signs, seizures and hypernatremia after activated charcoal administration. Small breed dogs and cats are more commonly affected due to their small size and large surface area, which predisposes them to osmotic intestinal free water loss. Therefore, the following guidelines should be kept in mind.

Current dosing recommendations for the liquid charcoal product Toxiban are approximately 5 ml/kg (a far lower dose than previously recommended by some sources). Sorbitol should be withheld in very small animals (unless the toxin is significantly life threatening) and should never be used for serial administration. Consider monitoring at-risk animals for 4-6 hours and/or tracking electrolytes post-administration. Be sure to provide access to water after administration

We hope you found this information helpful,

The team of PESCM



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