



## ABOUT BLACK SOAP

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Black soap, also called alata samina or anago samina, is a traditional handcrafted West African soap. The soap contains roasted plantain skins, bark from the silk cotton tree water, according to the Journal of African Society. Black soap is used by West Africans to cleanse the body and hair. Due to international exportation, black soap is a source of income for the West African villagers who make it. The soap is sold internationally on the Internet, at health food stores and in specialty stores.

**IDENTIFICATION** - As the name suggests, black soap is dark brown to black in color. Black soap gets its dark color from the main ingredient---roasted plantain skins. The longer the plantain skins are roasted, the darker the final color of the soap.

**ORIGINS** - Black soap is hand made in West Africa---predominately Ghana and Nigeria. The exact recipe for the soap varies according to the tribe who makes it. Family members orally pass down black soap recipes to the next generations. Variations of the recipes include the addition of cocoa pods or palm oil to give the soap a smoother texture. Some recipes do not include silk cotton tree bark.

**PROCESS** - The process for making black soap is lengthy and tedious. First, plantain skins are spread out to dry in the heat of the sun. After the plantain skins are dried, they are roasted in an open fire inside of a clay oven. The dried and roasted plantain skins are ground into a fine ash and mixed with ground up bark from the silk cotton tree. The plantain ash and ground bark are mixed with water and cooked in a pot over a fire, while it is stirred constantly, until the mixture thickens. Once the thick mixture cools enough to touch, it is shaped into balls and set aside to completely harden into a ball of soap.

**FEATURES** - **Black soap is completely natural and lye free, making it an ideal personal hygiene product for health conscious consumers. Info-Ghana describes black soap as "the only soap in the world that does not require lye, but lathers more than any other soap."**

**EFFECTS** - African black soap is rich in vitamins A and E; both nourish and soothe the skin. The soap is gentle enough for sensitive skin and is recommended as an all around skin treatment soap. Besides being used as a cleanser, in West Africa the soap is used to treat acne, rashes, skin discolorations and dry skin. The soap can be used as a shampoo for normal cleansing or to treat dandruff.

Read more: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/26468-black-soap/#ixzz2HcTJZXJM>



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## **Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS ) and Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLES).**

### **The Killers in your bathroom?**

**Both Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS) and its close relative Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLES) are commonly used in many soaps, shampoos, detergents, toothpastes and other products that we expect to "foam up". Both chemicals are very effective foaming agents, chemically known as surfactants.**

**SLS and SLES are esters of Sulphuric acid - SLS is also known as "Sulfuric acid monododecyl ester sodium salt", however there are over 150 different names by which it is known - see them here. In fact, SLES is commonly contaminated with dioxane, a known carcinogen.**

**Although SLES is somewhat less irritating than Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, it cannot be metabolised by the liver and its effects are therefore much longer-lasting.**

**A report published in the Journal of The American College of Toxicology in 1983 showed that concentrations as low as 0.5% could cause irritation and concentrations of 10-30% caused skin corrosion and severe irritation. National Institutes of Health "Household Products Directory" of chemical ingredients lists over 80 products that contain sodium lauryl sulfate. Some soaps have concentrations of up to 30%, which the ACT report called "highly irritating and dangerous".**

**Shampoos are among the most frequently reported products to the FDA. Reports include eye irritation, scalp irritation, tangled hair, swelling of the hands, face and arms and split and fuzzy hair. The main cause of these problems is sodium lauryl sulfate.**

**So why is a dangerous chemical like sodium lauryl sulfate used in our soaps and shampoos?**

**The answer is simple - it is cheap. The sodium lauryl sulfate found in our soaps is exactly the same as you would find in a car wash or even a garage, where it is used to degrease car engines.**

**In the same way as it dissolves the grease on car engines, sodium lauryl sulfate also dissolves the oils on your skin, which can cause a drying effect. It is also well documented that it denatures skin proteins, which causes not only irritation, but also allows environmental contaminants easier access to the lower, sensitive layers of the skin.**

**Perhaps most worryingly, SLS is also absorbed into the body from skin application. Once it has been absorbed, one of the main effects of sodium lauryl sulfate is to mimic the activity of the hormone Oestrogen. This has many health implications and may be responsible for a variety of health problems from PMS and Menopausal symptoms to dropping male fertility and increasing female cancers such as breast cancer, where oestrogen levels are known to be involved.**