



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Castor Oil

This information describes the common uses of Castor Oil, how it works, and its possible side effects.

Tell your healthcare providers about any dietary supplements you're taking, such as herbs, vitamins, minerals, and natural or home remedies. This will help them manage your care and keep you safe.

What is it?

Castor oil is extracted from the beans of the castor plant. It has been historically used to relieve constipation, stomach ache and to induce labor.

Castor oil supplements come as softgels, capsules, and liquids. It is also added to skin care products.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

Castor oil is used to:

- Treat constipation (difficult or infrequent bowel movements)
- Heal wounds
- Induce labor (childbirth)

Castor oil also has other uses that haven't been studied by doctors to see if they work.

Talk with your healthcare providers before using castor oil or castor oil supplements. Herbal supplements are stronger than the herbs you would use in

cooking.

They can also interact with some medications and affect how they work. For more information, read the “What else do I need to know?” section below.

What are the side effects?

- Abdominal cramping
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Bloating
- Dizziness
- Allergic reactions

What else do I need to know?

- Avoid castor oil if you’re pregnant. Castor oil can cause premature contractions.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you have gastrointestinal obstruction, appendicitis, inflammatory bowel disease, bulimia (eating disorder) or anorexia nervosa (eating disorder). Castor oil may worsen your condition.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you’re not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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