

Healing with Castor Oil Packs

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What is Castor Oil?

Castor oil is derived from the bean of the Ricinus communis or Palma Christi plant (palm of christ). The Palma Christi has been used therapeutically for centuries in the folk medicine of ancient India, China, Persia, Africa, Greece, Rome, and the Americas. It has large, beautiful palmate leaves hence the name, Palma Christi.

Edgar Cayce, a medical intuitive known as the "sleeping prophet", introduced castor oil packs for the treatment of many conditions. In Cayce's writings, castor oil is presented as a marvelous source of natural remedies. As an external oil pack, it has been used to treat a variety of health conditions such as arthritis, liver and intestinal disorders, tumors, cysts, and skin conditions. Taken internally, castor oil is a strong cathartic and is not recommended as there are ways to relieve constipation that are not as harsh.

Some of the numerous uses of castor oil include the treatment of breast cysts, fibroids, ovarian cysts, congestion of abdominal organs, skin conditions, small benign cysts, and adhesions from surgery. Wherever there is congestion, decreased blood flow and need for healing, castor oil can be an effective treatment option.

How does castor oil work?

Research has shown that castor oil has a unique chemical profile rich in ricinoleic acid which is known to exist in nature only in castor oil. Double blind studies conducted by the Association for Research and Enlightenment, Inc. demonstrated an increase in lymphocyte production and the level of activity of T-cell lymphocytes in the group that used castor oil packs. T-cell lymphocytes originate from bone marrow and the thymus gland, identify and kill invaders such as virus, bacteria, and fungi.

In addition to strengthening the immune system, castor oil appears to have a balancing effect on the autonomic nervous system, increasing liver activity and improving digestion.

What is a castor oil pack?

The standard pack consists of several layers of white wool flannel, (holds heat better), but cotton flannel is also used with excellent results. Castor oil is soaked on the material and applied to the area in need of healing.

How is it used?

Warm the castor oil to skin temperature in a non-metallic pot. Soak the flannel in the oil to make it well saturated but not dripping. Place the pack over the area to be treated, and cover the pack with plastic food wrap. Place a heat source, a heating pack or hot water bottle, on top of the pack and maintain a constant warmth throughout the treatment. Secure this in place with a heavy towel.

While the pack is working, quietly meditate to connect the mind and body healing energies. This assists the spiritual essence of the plant to assist in your healing. Often people find the thoughts that occur in a meditative state are as important as the properties of the oil to their healing process. Journal any thoughts, feelings, images that occur during this meditative treatment.

Adjust the heat setting to your comfort, but **do not fall asleep while using the heating pad!!** Continue treatment for one hour.

How do I prevent staining from the oil?

Protect any bedding or clothing from staining since castor oil is highly penetrating. Plastic sheeting from dry cleaning bags, old plastic table cloths, shower curtain, old heavy bath towel etc. are typically effective. Washing soda (sal soda) may be used during laundering to remove some of the stains on fabric.

How are the packs maintained?

To re-use a pack for multiple treatments, just re-saturate with oil. Packs can be stored in a plastic bag (in refrigerator) or glass jar for six months to a year as long as it does not become rancid or soiled. Packs should not be shared among persons. Wash alone in machine or hand wash approx. every 2-3 weeks.

How often do I use the packs as a treatment?

A typical regimen for non-acute conditions is three times a week, every other night for three weeks with the fourth week off. Repeat this for two more cycles, take a week off, and then continue once a week until symptoms subside.

For acute situations, use for 30 minutes nightly for five nights, take two nights off, then repeat the cycle for two weeks or until the condition is resolved.

In either case, individual response will differ depending on the symptoms that are being treated, please consult with your health care provider.

Are there any contraindications to useage?

Do not use the packs during times of heavy bleeding, gaseuous stomach, intestinal conditons, or during pregnancy. Again, consult with your health care provider.

On rare occasion a rash can occur at the site. To avoid this you can wash the oil off after your treatment with a weak solution of 1 TBL baking soda to one cup of warm water.

Recommended Reading and References:

Gladstar, Rosemary, 1993; Herbal Healing for Women. Simon and Schuster, NY, NY.

McGary, Wiliam, M.D., 1993; The Oil That Heals, A Physicians Successes with Castor Oil Treatments. A.R.E. Press, Virginia Beach, Va.

Northrup, Christiane, 1994, Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, NY, NY.

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