

What is castor oil used for?

The greenish extract of a large tropical plant, castor oil has been used for many years to ease constipation and induce vomiting. As any Little Rascals fan knows, castor oil is a notoriously ghastly tasting liquid. It is recommended that chilling castor oil in the fridge and mixing with cold orange juice before ingesting to make it more palatable. But castor oil is not just for breakfast anymore. It is somewhat difficult to imagine that, barely a few decades ago, castor oil was valued chiefly as a purgative. Who would have then anticipated the commercial respectability it would attain and the national and international demand it would come to enjoy? This once dreaded substance is now used in plastics, textiles, paints, cosmetics, and a number of inks and industrial adhesives. One reason for the current popularity of castor oil is due to the fact that its numerous chemical derivatives are renewable sources, biodegradable and eco-friendly. -- <http://ask.yahoo.com>

Tonsillitis, a common problem in winter

Tonsillitis refers to the inflammation of a tonsil -- the large, fleshy, oval masses of tissue that lie in the lateral wall of the oral pharynx on either side of the throat. These clusters of tissue contain cells that produce antibodies that are helpful in fighting infection.

What causes tonsillitis?

There are many possible, highly contagious bacterial and viral causes of tonsillitis. Causes of tonsillitis include the following:

- Streptococcus (commonly referred to as "strep") bacteria (the most common cause of tonsillitis)
- adenoviruses
- the influenza virus
- the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV)
- parainfluenza viruses
- enteroviruses
- the herpes simplex virus

What are the symptoms of tonsillitis?

The following are the most common symptoms for

tonsillitis, however, individuals may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

- swollen, red tonsils (often coated with a yellow, gray, or white membrane)
- blisters or painful ulcerated areas on the throat
- sudden onset sore throat
- pain with swallowing
- headache
- loss of appetite
- malaise
- chills
- fever
- swollen and tender lymph nodes in the neck or jaw area

Additional symptoms of tonsillitis in children include:

- nausea
- vomiting
- abdominal pain

The symptoms of tonsillitis may resemble other conditions or medical problems. In that case patients should consult a



physician for diagnosis.

Can tonsillitis be prevented?

The following suggestions may help to inhibit the spread of the contagious illnesses that are generally responsible for the spread of tonsillitis:

- Keep your (and your child's) distance from anyone with tonsillitis or a sore throat.
- Do not share utensils, drinking glasses, toothbrushes, etc., with anyone who has tonsillitis or a sore throat.
- Wash your (and your child's) hands frequently.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, and teach your children to do the same.

It is also possible that someone (especially a child) is carrying the strep bacteria (a common cause of tonsillitis) without presenting any symptoms of the infection. This person acts as a "carrier" and can transmit the infection to another person.

Treatment for tonsillitis:

Specific treatment will be determined by the physician(s) based on:

- patient's age, overall health, and medical history
- extent of the disease
- expectations for the course of the disease
- patient's tolerance for specific medications, procedures, or therapies
- patient's (or family's) opinion or preference
- the cause of the infection

Tonsillitis caused by a viral infection is treated differently than tonsillitis caused by a bacterial infection. Generally, tonsillitis caused by a bacterial strep infection can be successfully treated with an antibiotic medication. Viral tonsillitis is not treated with antibiotic medications, as antibiotics are ineffective at defeating viral infections, but may be treated with other antiviral medications.

<http://www.methodisthealth.com>

What causes the dark circles under your eyes? Is it lack of sleep?



There are a number of possibilities for dark circles under the eyes. As you tack on the years, the skin covering your eyelids thins out, which may cause the blood vessels to become more apparent, giving your lower eyelids a darker appearance. It is also possible that thin eyelids can be inherited. Dark eyelids can also be caused from swelling in your lower eyelids. When you are lying down, gravity causes fluid to collect in your lower eyelids, which may create shadows below your eyes.

In most cases the condition is a result of aging or inheritance, and does not indicate illness or toxicity in the body. He also provides two simple Ayurvedic

remedies that can help eliminate the hollow look.

Gently massage saffron or almond oil on the dark area before going to bed.

Dip cotton pads in fig juice, rosewater, or cold milk. Lie down with your feet raised higher than your head, then place the wet pads on your closed eyes. Stay that way for 10 minutes.

Whether you have inherited the dark circles under your eyes or are just suffering from fatigue, there are ways to conceal the circles with makeup.

There are also ways to hide the circles with makeup.

Clinical features of common cold



This highly infectious illness causes a mild systemic upset and prominent nasal symptoms. It is due to infection by rhinoviruses, the majority of which belong to the picornavirus group and exist in at least 100 different antigenic strains. Infectivity from close personal contact (nasal mucus on hands) or droplets is high in the early stages of the infection, and spread is facilitated by overcrowding and poor ventilation. On average, individuals suffer two to three colds per year; but the incidence

lessens with age, presumably as a result of accumulating immunity to the causative virus strains. The incubation is from 12 hours to an upper limit of 5 days.

The clinical features are tiredness, slight pyrexia, malaise and a sore nose and pharynx. Profuse, watery nasal discharge, eventually becoming thick and mucopurulent, persists for up to a week. Sneezing is present in the early stage. Secondary bacterial infection occurs only in a minority.

Remedies from depression

Depression is a problem that affects our normal lifestyle. The impact of depression is very bad. The precise cause of depression is not known, but evidence points to several factors discussed as follows:

Heredity

Depression does "run in families." People with a close relative who has had major depression or bipolar disorder are twice as likely to develop depression themselves.

Biochemical makeup

Every human being has a unique biochemical makeup. Whether or not a person will experience depression (or other neurological disorders) depends largely on the amount of certain brain chemicals and how they interact in the central nervous system.

A person's **biochemistry** is an intricate balancing act. Think of a choreographed ballet with a troupe of dancers performing at once. If one or more of the dancers are out of step, the whole production is thrown off balance. So it is with an individual's biochemistry.

The brain is the "master" control center that governs our lives in every conceivable way. Just as messages from the brain (in the form of electrical impulses) control our movements, other messages control our emotions.

Neurons, or nerve cells, are the most basic units in the brain. Chemical substances called neurotransmitters carry messages or signals across these gaps to various nerve cells.

If there is a deficiency or an imbalance in certain neurotransmitters, a variety of disorders can result.

The neurotransmitters *serotonin*, *dopamine*, and *norepinephrine* are the chemical messengers believed to be responsible for moods and emotions. Serotonin, in particular, has been implicated in depression. It is believed that a deficiency in the brain of the chemical messenger serotonin - or a disruption in the way it is able to perform its actions as a chemical messenger - has a profound negative effect on mood and emotions.

For instance, a professional

Psychological makeup

It is said that a person's basic personality traits are often defined in early childhood. One defining factor is the social environment to which we are exposed. What happens to us in childhood can have a deep-rooted effect on our attitudes and behaviors in adulthood. For instance:

- Long-standing neglect, repression, or abuse in childhood will affect one's view of the world later on.
- Conditions of social deprivation, such as overcrowding and the lack of a confiding relationship with a trustworthy person, can affect the quality of one's relationships throughout life.

Stressful life events

A person's reactions to external factors can affect the normal level and activity of the chemical messengers in the brain, thus affecting mood and emotions. A stressful life event can plunge a person into clinical depression, especially if a person is at risk for depression due to other factors. Stressful life events include:

- Prolonged medical illness
- Illness or death of a loved one
- Divorce
- Ending a close relationship
- Loss of a job
- Moving to a new home
- Financial or legal problems
- Fluctuating Hormone Levels

In women, fluctuating hormone levels can contribute to depression. Conditions linked to hormones in women are:

- **Premenstrual syndrome.** Approximately 3 percent to 8 percent of women in their reproductive years are affected with premenstrual syndrome (PMS) during the week or so before their menstrual period. PMS is characterized by depressed mood, mood swings, irritability, and tension or anxiety. It lessens with the onset of the menstrual period each month.
- **Depression after pregnancy.** This temporary form of depression is strongly linked to hormonal fluctuations following pregnancy, but social factors may play a role in some cases. For instance, a professional

woman who is suddenly faced with being home every day, essentially alone with a baby, may feel isolated and depressed.

Depression in menopause. Menopausal depression was once attributed to middle-aged women feeling sad over the loss of their childbearing capabilities (the loss of their "youth" or "femininity"), and the loss of their grown children (the "empty nest"). There is no evidence that this is true. In fact,



evidence suggests that for some women, menopause and the "empty nest" may signify a new freedom in their lives to pursue long-delayed interests and devote more time to their own needs.

However, hormonal fluctuations in menopause are real, and some women suffer from mood swings, fatigue, and depression. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can lift mood and fatigue among women who are medically able and who choose to take HRT.

Other factors

Other factors that can lead to depression include:

- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Use of certain medications, such as steroids and some blood pressure medications
- Underlying general medical conditions that can cause depressive symptoms, such as hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid gland), chronic fatigue syndrome, and others.

How is depression treated?

Depending on the type and

severity of depression, treatment may involve:

- Psychotherapy (counseling), which is the treatment of mental and emotional disorders by psychological techniques and counseling
- Antidepressant medications which can restore proper chemical balance in the brain
- Other treatments such as light therapy and electroconvulsive therapy

Treatment is successful in 80



percent to 90 percent of clinically depressed people

In mild to moderate depression, psychotherapy may be all that is needed.

Regular exercise is also beneficial for helping to uplift mood in milder forms of depression.

If symptoms do not improve in a couple of months, and certainly in more severe cases of depression, medication may be recommended.

If there is a risk of suicide, medication or hospitalization may be necessary right away.

For most people, the best and most lasting results are obtained with a combination of psychotherapy and antidepressant medication.

To be considered recovered, one must be in remission - that is, symptoms must not be present - for four to six months. The person should have returned to his or her usual ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

<http://health.yahoo.com>

Eating too much may raise colon cancer risk

In determining a person's risk of colon cancer, how much they eat may be more important than what they eat, US researchers report in the American Journal of Epidemiology.

As lead investigator Dr. Jessie Satia-Abouta told Reuters Health, "the results of the study suggest that high intakes of total energy - calories - and individual macronutrients - carbohydrates, protein, and fat - may increase risk for colon cancer."

However, "the risk associated with individual macronutrients appears to be largely due to the fact that they contribute to total (calorie) intake."

Satia-Abouta of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and colleagues came to these conclusions following a study investigating the high rate of colon cancer in blacks.

The study involved 933 white and 676 black subjects. Among the findings, a diet high in fiber reduced the risk of colon

cancer to a much greater extent in blacks than in whites.

Other results differed depending on whether total calorie intake was considered. For example, in both racial groups, high intake of individual energy sources was generally associated with a two- to threefold increase in colon cancer risk. However, these associations largely disappeared when the authors adjusted for total calorie intake.

The investigators conclude that total calorie intake "was consistently associated with colon cancer risk, but associations with individual macronutrients varied somewhat by race and by adjustment for (calorie) intake."

Thus, Satia-Abouta pointed out, "as is the case with many other chronic diseases, proper (calorie) balance appears to be important in reducing the risk for colon cancer."

<http://www.reuters.com>

New insole helps diabetics with foot problems

Investigators at the University of Michigan have designed a shoe insole that is customised to help diabetic patients decrease the friction and pressure placed on foot sores.

As a result, the researchers argue, the insole helps prevent foot ulcers and calluses from progressing to limb-threatening infections.

"If you can reduce friction and shear, you can get a better healing of the ulcer," designer Ammanath Peethambaran told.

He said that existing insoles, which focus on alleviating pressure but do nothing to stop friction in the area of the sore, often do not work. With existing insoles, the ulcer "doesn't heal. We can reduce it, but it keeps coming back again," Peethambaran said.

The new design, in contrast, is made of materials that enable the foot to stay fixed in one place while walking, preventing friction from aggravating a sore and causing an infection, Peethambaran

explained.

In preliminary studies with about 10 diabetic patients with ulcers, Peethambaran said, the insole cut healing time by half, enabling an ulcer that would typically heal in three months to disappear in six weeks.

He said that he hopes to continue to test the insoles in diabetic patients, and publish the results of these experiments in the near future.

Peethambaran stressed that the new insoles are not widely available, and can only be obtained when patients get a prescription from their doctors and fill it at the University of Michigan. He noted that two insoles cost around \$400.

The orthotist added that the same insole might also help non-diabetics with foot sores, and said he hopes to one day work with a manufacturer to mass produce the insoles. "We are working on it," he said.

<http://www.reuters.com>

A spoonful of cinnamon helps treat diabetes

People with diabetes can help keep their bodies healthy by simply adding a dash of spice to their diet, new research reports.

In a study, diabetics who incorporated one gram - equivalent to less than one-quarter teaspoon - of cinnamon per day for 40 days into their normal diets experienced a decrease in levels of blood sugar, cholesterol and blood fats.

And for people with diabetes, the less of those substances in the body, the better.

Type 2 diabetes arises when the body loses sensitivity to insulin, a hormone that shuttles the sugars from food into body cells to be used for energy. As a result, the amount of sugar, or glucose, in the blood remains high, leading to fatigue and blurred vision. Over the long term, excess blood glucose can increase the risk of heart disease, kidney failure and blindness.

The current findings suggest that a small amount of cinnamon can help protect diabetics from these and other potential complications of their condition, study author Dr. Richard A. Anderson of the Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center in Maryland told Reuters Health.

As an added bonus, cinnamon contains virtually no calories, Anderson said, allowing diabetics to add zest to their meals without adding to their waistlines.

Cinnamon contains less than 3 calories per gram, "negligible in the total dietary intake," Anderson said.

Previous research has shown that cinnamon appears to help fat cells recognize and respond to insulin. In test tube and in animal studies, the spice increased glucose metabolism by about 20 times.

Anderson noted that cinnamon may also help stave off the onset of type 2 diabetes in people at risk of the condition.

He added that cinnamon contains some substances that can be toxic in high amounts, so people should be sure not to get too much of a good thing. "Certainly, a gram per day is not a high amount," he reassured.

During the study, Anderson and his colleagues asked 60 people with type 2 diabetes to consume 1, 3, or 6 grams of cinnamon each day for 40 days, or the equivalent amount of wheat flour, as a placebo. Both the cinnamon and wheat flour were administered in capsule form.

Reporting in the journal Diabetes Care, Anderson and his team found that all cinnamon-takers experienced a drop in blood levels of glucose, fats and cholesterol by up to 30 percent. No change was seen in the people taking placebo capsules.

Anderson explained that cinnamon contains compounds that help make insulin more efficient, improving the hormone's ability to bring glucose to the cells that need it.

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How did the Red Cross start?

The international Red Cross movement began by a chance occurrence. In 1859, a Swiss businessman, Henry Dunant, traveled to northern Italy to obtain a business document. In Italy, he happened to witness a one-day battle between Austrian and French armies outside the town of Solferino. He was horrified to see that 9,000 wounded soldiers were left without any medical attention, and he organized local villagers to help care for the wounded.

After returning home to Geneva, Dunant could not forget what he had seen, and, in 1862, he published his memoir of the event titled A Memory of Solferino. The book was a huge success and influenced a Geneva charity society to join with Dunant to form International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which met for the first time in February 1863.

Later that year, the committee held an international conference to bring together governmental and private aid organizations. (This combination of public and private support became an essential element of the Red Cross.) The 1863 conference led to ten resolutions that outlined the goals and organization of the ICRC.



The ICRC wanted every country to form its own Red Cross committee to address their needs and to work in concert through the ICRC. The first Red Cross societies were created in Belgium, Prussia, Denmark, France, Italy, Spain, and other European countries in 1863. The American Red Cross was founded by famous Civil War nurse Clara Barton in 1881. Almost every nation in the world has formed its own Red Cross or Red Crescent (as it is called in Muslim countries) organization.

Each national group supports the fundamental principles of the movement, which are humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality.

Many of these principles are at the heart of the Geneva Convention of 1864 (also known as the Treaty of Geneva), created by the ICRC. This document mandated that hospitals and medical personnel be treated as neutral parties during war and that wounded must be cared for, regardless of nationality. The Geneva Convention was the start of international humanitarian law and has had enormous influence around the world.