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## Castor Oil Delivers

Article in *Obstetrics*, March 2000:

A prospective evaluation by Garry et al found that women who received one dose of castor oil (derived from *Ricinus communis*) were more likely to begin labor within 24 hours as compared to those women who did not receive castor oil. Study participants were similar in maternal and gestational age, had singleton pregnancies with intact membranes at 40 and 42 weeks, Bishop scores  $\leq 4$ , and no evidence of uterine contraction. Candidates with fetal or maternal complications were excluded. Participants were given 60mL castor oil in fruit juice (n=52) or no treatment at all (n=48).

Of the 52 treated with castor oil, 30 began active labor (defined as  $\geq 1$  contractions every 5 minutes with cervical dilation of  $\geq 4$  cm) within 24 hours; only 2 of the 48 in the no-castor oil group began labor within this time. The authors found no relationship between castor oil, birth weight, or mode of delivery, and induction by castor oil produced equal results in nulliparous and multiparous women. Apgar scores and occurrences of meconium-stained amniotic fluid were also similar. No adverse outcomes were reported; however, all participants treated with castor oil suffered from nausea. Garry et al concluded that there is benefit in using castor oil to initiate the labor process and note that, as castor oil is widely used in this regard, randomized, placebo-controlled trials should be done to determine castor oil's safety and efficacy.

Garry D, Figueroa R, Guillaume J, Cucco V. Use of castor oil in pregnancies at term. *Altern Ther Health Med.* 2000;6(1):77-79.