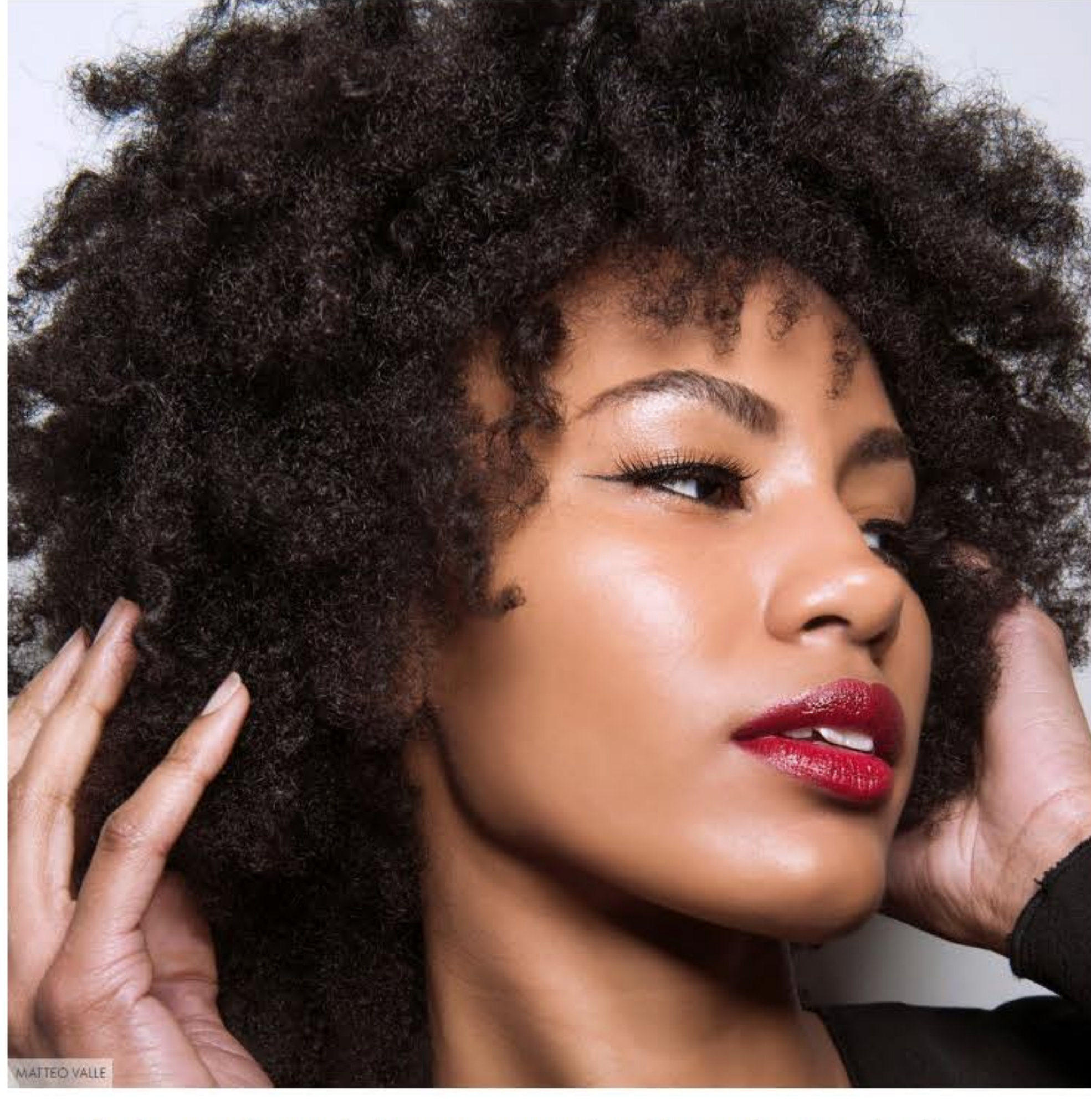


# Is Castor Oil The Secret To Hair Growth?

— Hair experts weigh in on this miracle ingredient.

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Ah, the eternal struggle between wanting long hair and wanting healthy hair wages on. In my quest to achieve mermaid-length hair minus yards of split-ends, I have looked into probably every product that claims to help hair growth. Biotin? Done it. Scalp massages? Why not. Avoid heat? Haha, sure.

If you've ever struggled with restoring your edges, excessive shedding, or thinness, there's a good chance you've heard about the alleged miracle hair growth properties of castor oil. A quick search on YouTube yields dozens of positive testimonials that show brows restored to Cara Delevingne's status and edges even Alicia Keys would envy. But is there any scientific evidence to back castor oil's growth stimulation claim?

## Meet the Experts

Dr. Nikki Hill, board-certified dermatologist and hair restoration expert

Bridgette Hill, certified trichologist (that's a hair doctor, if you didn't know) and colorist

## What is castor oil and what are its benefits?

Castor oil, also known as *Ricinus communis*, is nutrient-rich vegetable oil from castor beans. Although it originates in tropical east Africa, it is widely used in India and the West Indies for cosmetic and medicinal purposes. Castor oil is usually clear or pale yellow unless derived through roasting or boiling, known as black castor oil.

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Down to a molecular level, castor oil is a long-chained fatty acid. "Fatty acids provide essential proteins and nutrients to hair follicles and prevent hair follicle inflammation," says Bridgette Hill.

Aside from being anti-inflammatory, castor oil has a few other noteworthy properties. "Some benefits of using castor oil include

increased gloss or shine of the hair, increased hair shaft flexibility by coating the hair shaft, [and] providing antimicrobial properties," says Dr. Hill.

## Does castor oil stimulate hair growth?

"No studies exist showing castor oil can increase hair growth >1cm/month, which is the FDA standard of hair growth," says Dr. Hill. "However, I have patients tell me different all the time. Additionally, 90% of castor oil is made up of the fatty acid ricinoleic acid. [It] is known to stimulate the Prostaglandin E2 receptor, leading to blood vessel dilation. When applied to the scalp, increased blood vessel dilation increases the flow of oxygen-rich and nutrient-rich blood to the powerhouse of your follicle, the dermal papilla, or the root of the hair."

Bridgette Hill agrees that castor oil indirectly promotes hair growth. "Because of the nutrients in castor oil, it protects the hair follicle from outside cellular and tissue invaders that destroy the health and vitality of the hair follicle."

## Is castor oil safe to use on the eyelashes and eyebrows?

The short answer: yes to the eyebrows, but be cautious with the eyelashes. "If there isn't an allergy to castor oil after patch testing, it is safe to use on the eyebrows," says Dr. Hill. "There is no safety data about castor oil and eye health, so I would be cautious and speak with an ophthalmologist about applying castor oil in close proximity to the eye."

## How should castor oil be applied to your hair and scalp?

Although castor oil is widely used, it is not meant for everyone. Therefore, the importance of a patch test comes into play again before applying it to your scalp. "Apply a small amount behind the ear or the inner upper arm for a week," says Dr. Hill.

Once you determine that castor oil is compatible with your scalp, Bridgette Hill has a few suggestions for each hair type:

**Fine to medium straight hair:** Castor oil can be used as a deep treatment to protect the very ends of your hair fiber, the last 2-3 inches of hair. Use it as a pre-shampoo treatment to help keep the tangles away. Be sure not to overuse—shampoo out and style as desired.

**Medium to thick straight/wavy hair:** Apply throughout the entire head for an intense pre-shampoo treatment. Add heat or steam for deeper penetration into the hair cuticle.

**Wavy to loose curls:** I suggest mixing drops of castor oil into conditioners during these hot and humid summer months.

**Curly to tightly coiled:** I suggest using castor oil as needed throughout your regimen, [as a] pre-shampoo, added treatment, or as a weekly moisturizer. It is essential to perform a proper monthly detox shampoo when using heavy oils like castor oil.

## What is the best type of castor oil to use?

Both of our hair experts recommend cold-pressed castor oil.

"Cold-pressed castor oil can be used on the hair shaft. However, black castor oil should be applied only to the scalp," explains Dr. Hill. "If black castor oil is applied to the hair, a cuticle-sealing technique should be used afterward. Both forms will provide sufficient components of ricinoleic acid."

## When should you avoid castor oil?

It is best to avoid using castor oil on your hair if you're suffering from dandruff. Both of our experts say it can make the condition worse.

### Castor Oil Picks

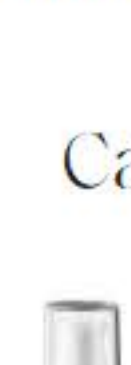


CASTOR OIL

Now Foods  
\$16.50

SHOP NOW

Dr. Nikki Hill recommends that people invest in "cold-pressed, heat-free, lighter-colored" castor oils. This is one of her favorites.

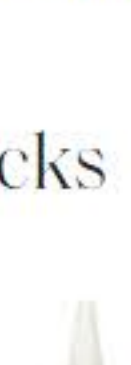


B. WELL ORGANIC + COLD-PRESSED 100% CASTOR OIL

Briggo  
\$26.00

SHOP NOW

Trichologist Bridgette Hill loves cold-pressed oils since the extraction process preserves its full nutrients without adding impurities. Her number one choice is this organic, fair-trade oil from Briggo.



DOMINICAN FORBIDDEN OILS

Bomba Curls  
\$22.00

SHOP NOW

Bomba Curls was born from founder Lulu Cordero's efforts to improve her traction-based alopecia with Dominican beauty secrets. Coffee seed oil stimulates the scalp's blood circulation, black cumin seed oil provides antihistamines to treat hair loss, and castor oil provides nutrient-rich moisture.



JAMAICAN BLACK CASTOR OIL

Tropic Isle Living  
\$9.97

SHOP NOW

This oil gets its name from its syrupy color, which results from the ash residue when the Jamaican castor beans are roasted. This ash is what many users attribute to helping with hair growth (although this information is not scientifically vetted).

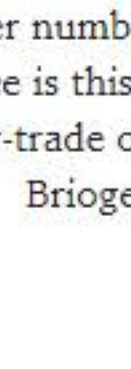


HAITIAN BLACK CASTOR OIL

Kreyol Essence  
\$18.00

SHOP NOW

Castor oil is notorious for having a strong, heavy scent that some people find unpleasant. Cocoa essential oil gives this oil an intoxicating chocolate scent while also promoting scalp circulation.

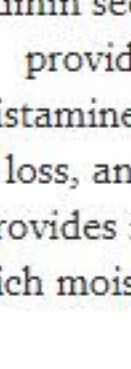


LASH + BROW SERUM

Bondi Boost  
\$34.95

SHOP NOW

Speed up your lash growth with this formula made of natural ingredients, including Jamaican black castor oil. The addition of JBC strengthens brittle, weak hair and encourages growth..

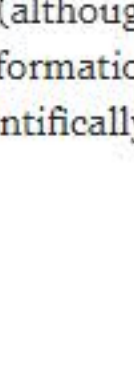


CASTOR OIL USDA ORGANIC COLD-PRESSED

Sky Organics  
\$13.95

SHOP NOW

Did you know that pesticides can creep their way into your hair oils? Be sure to purchase an organic castor oil to avoid them, especially if you plan to use it around the sensitive eye area.

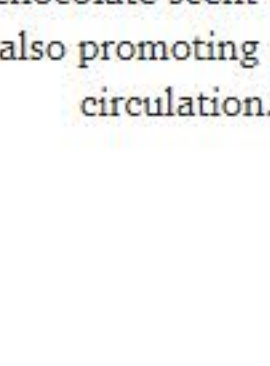


ELASTICIZER, DEEP CONDITIONING TREATMENT

PHILIP KINGSLEY  
\$50.00

SHOP NOW

Cate Blanchett, Kate Winslett, and Georgia May Jagger are all fans of this deep-conditioning pre-poo product. It uses castor oil and hydrolyzed elastin to moisturize and restore manageability.

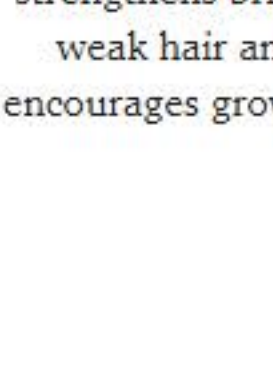


INVISIBLE OIL HOT OIL CONCENTRATE

Bumble and bumble  
\$30.00

SHOP NOW

It only takes two minutes to reap the benefits of this castor oil infused treatment. However, users claim that leaving it on for 30 minutes under a shower cap gives them the silkiest tresses.

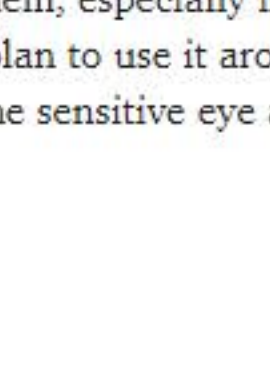


STRENGTHEN, GROW & RESTORE SHAMPOO AND CONDITIONER

SheaMoisture  
\$22.99

SHOP NOW

Curly and coily hair types love that this pair gives their hair great slip.

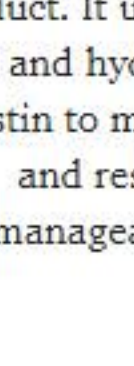


SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER + RESCUE SHOT TREATMENT

Pantene  
\$16.99  
\$9.99 (41% off)

SHOP NOW

Reviewers with dry, color-treated, and permed hair claim this sulfate-free set revitalized their strands.



BLACK JAMAICAN CASTOR OIL LEAVE IN CONDITIONER

Okay  
\$8.49  
\$7.50 (12% off)

SHOP NOW

Although this product works great for all hair types, it's best suited for curly and coily textures since it's formulated with heavier moisturizers like black castor oil and shea butter.