

## TOP 12 BENEFITS OF ALOE VERA

Aloe Vera is really quite an incredible plant. It is a succulent plant and part of the lily family (Liliaceae), the same family that garlic and onions belong to. Different parts of the plant are used for different effects on the body and Aloe Vera has both internal and external applications. I love to juice the inner gel of the aloe plant and I even add it to my smoothies to gain some of the benefits of this incredible plant. Be sure to read the last section about over-use of this plant as well as dose recommendations.

Aloe Vera contains over 200 active components including vitamins, minerals, amino acids, enzymes, polysaccharide, and fatty acids- no wonder it's used for such a wide range of remedies. The bulk of the Aloe Vera leaf is filled with a clear gel-like substance, which is approximately 99% water. Man has used aloe therapeutically for over 5000 years. The list of benefits and effects for this miraculous plant are many.

Here is a list of the Top 12 Benefits and Medicinal Uses for Aloe Vera:

### 1. Aloe Vera Is High in Vitamins & Minerals:

Aloe Vera contains many vitamins including A, C, E, folic acid, choline, B1, B2, B3 (niacin), B6. Aloe Vera is also one of the few plants that contains vitamin B12.

Some of the 20 minerals found in Aloe Vera include: calcium, magnesium, zinc, chromium, selenium, sodium, iron, potassium, copper, manganese.

### 2. Aloe Vera is High in Amino Acids & Fatty Acids

Amino acids are the building blocks of protein. There are about 22 amino acids that are necessary for the human body and it is said that 8 of these are essential. Estimates of the amino acids found in aloe range from 18-20 amino acids, with all 8 essential amino acids. Aloe Vera also includes quite an impressive range of fatty acids. Aloe contains three plant sterols, which are important fatty acids- HCL cholesterol (which lowers fats in the blood), campesterol, and B-sitosterol. All are helpful in reducing symptoms of allergies and acid indigestion. Other fatty acids include linoleic, linolenic, myristic, caprylic, oleic, palmitic, and stearic.

### 3. Aloe Vera is an Adaptogen

Aloe Vera is a well-known adaptogen. An adaptogen is something that boosts the body's natural ability to adapt to external changes and resist illness. It is thought that aloe's power as an adaptogen balances the body's system, stimulating the defense and adaptive mechanisms of the body. This allows you an increased ability to cope with stress (physical, emotional and environmental stress like pollution)

#### **4. Aloe Helps with Digestion**

Poor digestion is related to many diseases. A properly functioning digestive tract is one of the keys and foundations of health. Aloe is known to soothe and cleanse the digestive tract and help improve digestion. The interesting thing about taking aloe internally is that, because it is an adaptogen, it helps with either constipation or diarrhea, helping to regulate your elimination cycles in whatever way you need. It's been a great remedy for people with problems such as irritable bowel syndrome as well as acid reflux. Aloe also helps to decrease the amount of unfriendly bacteria and in our gut keeping your healthy intestinal flora in balance. Aloe is also a vermifuge, which means it helps to rid the body of intestinal worms.

#### **5. Aloe Helps in Detoxification**

Aloe Vera is a gelatinous plant food, just like seaweeds and chia. The main benefit to consuming gelatinous plant foods in your diet is that these gels move through the intestinal tract absorbing toxins along the way and get eliminated through the colon. This will help the proper elimination of waste from your body and help the detoxification of your body.

#### **6. Aloe Alkalizes the Body**

Disease cannot manifest in an alkaline environment. Most people are living and subsisting on mostly acidic foods. For great health, remember the 80/20 rule – 80% alkaline forming foods and 20% acidic. Aloe vera is an alkaline forming food. It alkalizes the body, helping to balance overly acidic dietary habits

#### **7. Cardiovascular Health**

There hasn't been a lot of studies conducted in this but there has been some research to show that Aloe Vera extract injected into the blood, greatly multiplies the oxygen transportation and diffusion capabilities of the red blood cells. According to a study published in the 2000 issue of the British Medical Journal, beta sitosterol helps to lower cholesterol. By regulating blood pressure, improving circulation and oxidation of the blood, lowering cholesterol, and making blood less sticky, Aloe Vera juice may be able to help lower the risk of heart disease.

#### **8. Aloe Helps Boost the Immune System**

I think given the stresses of our daily lives, every one can use a boost to their immune systems. The polysaccharides in aloe vera juice stimulate macrophages, which are the white blood cells of your immune system that fight against viruses. Aloe is also an immune enhancer because of its high level of anti-oxidants, which help combat the unstable compounds known as free-radicals, contributing to the aging process. (Free radicals are a bi-product of life itself, it is a naturally occurring process but we can overload ourselves with

unnecessary free-radicals by living an unhealthy lifestyle) Aloe is also an antipyretic which means it used to reduce or prevent fever.

## **9. Aloe Vera is great for the Skin**

Because of aloe's well-known healing properties for the skin, aloe is one of the primary compounds used in the cosmetic industry. It is a known vulnerary, (meaning it helps heal wounds) and is great for applying topically to burns, abrasions, psoriasis and even to bug bites. Aloe acts as an analgesic, acting to help relieve pain of wounds. It's feels especially good to cut a stem of aloe, place it in the fridge and rub it on sun burnt skin – the immediate soothing effect feels like an absolute lifesaver. Aloe is also an antipruritic: A substance that relieves or prevents itching. Aloe Vera is an astringent: which causes the contraction of body tissues, typically used to reduce bleeding from minor abrasions.

Due to aloe's high water content (over 99% water) it is a great way to hydrate, moisturize and rejuvenate the skin and fits within my general guideline: "Don't put anything on your skin that you wouldn't eat!" Aloe increases the elasticity of the skin making it more flexible through collagen and elastin repair. Aloe is an emollient, helping to soften and soothe the skin. It helps supply oxygen to the skin cells, increasing the strength and synthesis of skin tissue and induces improved blood flow to the skin through capillary dilation.

## **10. Disinfectant, Anti-biotic, Anti-microbial, Germicidal, Anti-bacterial, Anti-septic, Anti-fungal & Anti-viral:**

Wow, I think that covers all anti-bases. Okay, I admit, that was just a sneaky way to add in another 8 good reasons why you should keep Aloe Vera handy and incorporate it into your lifestyle. Aloe Vera's active ingredients are sulphur, lupeol, salicylic acid, cinnamic acid, urea nitrogen and phenol which are substances that prevent the growth of disease-causing microorganisms and act as a team to provide antimicrobial activity thus eliminating many internal and external infections, also active against bacteria. It also helps to treat fungal and viral infections.

## **11. Aloe Helps Reduce Inflammation**

Aloe Vera contains 12 substances, including B-sisterole, which can help to slow down or inhibit inflammation. This may be able to help with painful joints due to stiffness and help improve joint flexibility.

## **12. Weight Loss – A Secondary effect**

Improving your digestion, and detoxifying your will have a secondary effect in promoting weight loss because when we start to improve our digestion we naturally eliminate more

efficiently, which is a primary way they we detoxify – through our bowels. This will lighten our toxic load on the body and will give us more energy.

### **Aloe Vera Intake Precautions**

This plant is incredibly medicinal, yet there are some cautions against long-term use. Just because a little is beneficial, doesn't mean that a lot is more beneficial. This is an incredibly potent herb and should be used with a level of respect for its potency. Long-term use can lead to loss of electrolytes, especially potassium.

Avoid taking aloe internally during pregnancy, menstruation, if you have hemorrhoids or degeneration of the liver and gall bladder.

### **Aloe Vera Dosage**

Many people are trying to sell their aloe vera juice products. Like I always say "fresh is best". Aloe plants can grow pretty much anywhere. When I was living in Canada, I used to have several indoor aloe plants and they did really well. Now that I live in Hawaii, aloe grows everywhere, so I don't need to buy the juice, I just make it myself. Some companies selling Aloe juice recommend that we should take it 'regularly' but I don't necessarily agree. We need to treat this plant as the medicine that it is and by tuning into our bodies we can really start to notice if we're pulled to this plant for some level of healing. Would we take medicine unnecessarily without our bodies really needing it? Probably not, and that's the same with plant medicines. If you're experiencing one of these digestive ailments use it for a short period of time for it's course in treatment (1-2 weeks) and then stop and wait at least a month before starting again.

When I was living in Vancouver, I bought a big jug of the aloe juice and was taking shots of it in the morning. One of the ways that we can tune into our bodies is to simply notice immediate reactions. When I first started taking it, my body was totally fine with it, the taste didn't bother me, and I could tell it was ok for my body. After a couple of weeks, I would take a shot and I would get a bit of a gag reflex. Our bodies are incredible at communicating with us. This was my sign that the Aloe medicine had run its course in treatment and didn't start taking it again for at least another month or two.

We see something that says weight-loss on it and we just go to town on taking it without considering the potential toxic effects of over-doing a potent plant medicine like Aloe. I don't think in any culture, aloe was used internally every single day – most traditional cultures understand that more isn't always necessarily better and use it when it is actually needed. This way, it ensures the use of the effectiveness of the constituents of the plant when we are in need of it. One last note about Aloe Vera juice; it does have a strong pungent taste, so if you can't cope with taking it straight, mix it in your smoothie or add it to a green juice.

**Laura Dawn - Aloha from the Big Island of Hawaii.**