

## **ALOE VERA**

*The Ancient Egyptians revered it as the 'plant of immortality' and the Greeks used it for skin disorders; but it is only recently that scientists are attempting to verify the claims of this desert lily that has become nature's legendary healer...*

### ***What is Aloe Vera?***

Aloe Vera – a plant characterised by long, hard, sword-shaped green leaves with sharp points - is native to Africa and grows only in warm climates. It resembles a cactus in appearance but is actually a member of the Lily family (Liliaceae).

Aloe Vera is full of goodness. It is rich in vitamins A, B1, B2, B3, B6, B12, C, E, and Folic Acid. It also contains small amounts of amino acids, enzymes and more than 20 minerals including calcium, phosphorus, potassium, iron, sodium, choline, magnesium, manganese, copper, chromium and zinc.

### ***Natural healer..***

Modern clinical use of Aloe Vera began in the 1930s when there were reports of its successful use against x-ray and radium burns.

Today, its healing properties are countless. Not only is it claimed to be an immune system stimulant but it has also demonstrated anti-tumour effects.

Aloe Vera is also known to be a detoxifying agent, where it acts as a gentle cleanser and detoxifier when taken as a drink, working throughout the digestive system and skin tissue. It flushes out the dead skin cells, helps regenerate new cell growth and promotes healthier tissue.

It has anti-fungal properties and is used in anti-candida treatment, athlete's foot, thrush, warts and worm infestations.

Aloe Vera also has an incredible digestive function. It is generally beneficial to the entire gastrointestinal system. It improves digestion without causing diarrhoea; it reduces yeast content and promotes a more favourable balance of friendly bacteria in the gut. It can also decrease inflammation and help in healing stomach disorders, ulcers, constipation, haemorrhoids, rectal itching, and all colon problems.

Furthermore, Aloe Vera's anti-inflammatory properties have been used to treat such conditions as osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis; it can also reduce the redness, pain and swelling associated with muscular pain, sprains and strains, tendonitis, bruising and sunburn.

Aloe Vera also has many uses when applied topically. It increases circulation to the skin and can be used for frostbite, cuts, insect stings, itching, bruises, acne, eczema, psoriasis, prevention of scarring, and healing of wounds. It is a very effective moisturiser for the skin and is suitable for people with dry and sensitive skins because it has anti-histamine and antibiotic properties. Aloe vera also has anti-ageing factors (improved collagen formation), which rejuvenate the skin and reverse the process of age spots when applied as a gel.

### ***Buying and using Aloe Vera products***

Fortunately, Aloe Vera products can now be found in various health shops around Bahrain. When buying these products, keep the following in mind:

- Aloe Vera comes in many forms, including gel, juice or drinking gel, capsules, hair products, moisturising lotions, mouth wash, face creams and anti-perspirants. Practitioners usually find the gel the most effective, but the other forms are also beneficial.

- Also, it is important to make sure that Aloe Vera is on top of the ingredients list of the purchased products. Read the list of contents and make sure Aloe Vera is one of the three top ingredients – it should have close to 100% aloe.
- Quality, when buying Aloe Vera, is important, as only the leaf's inner gel should be used. Do not use aloe products that contain the latex or the whole leaf, and do not attempt to make your own Aloe Vera gel at home.
- When you start to use Aloe Vera, give it enough time to work (at least three months). If you start taking Aloe Vera as a drink, you need to establish what dosage is right for you. Start with as little as a teaspoon and then work your way up gradually. And remember to keep opened bottles of Aloe Vera drinking gel or juice in the fridge.

#### *Aloe Vera and IBS – Joanna's Story*

Joanna\*, a 35-year old workingwoman, has suffered many years of IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome). The causes and effects of IBS vary from one person to another, but it is mainly a non-serious digestive condition that causes a disturbance of the normal muscle function of the large intestine. Typical symptoms can include abdominal pain, excessive wind, indigestion, exhaustion and alternating diarrhoea and constipation.

Joanna reacted badly to spicy food, rich sauces and citrus fruits. These reactions got worse if she was under stress. From these, she would suffer either bad constipation or diarrhoea, each causing great discomfort.

She tried many remedies, medical and natural, but nothing seemed to work. She started taking Aloe Vera juice as a last resort, after she reached a stage where she could not enjoy anything that she ate and the IBS was affecting her physically and emotionally.

She started taking about 4 tablespoons a day (taken 10 minutes before food and spread over two doses) and it has helped her tremendously; her bowels became more regulated and she stopped experiencing the abdominal distension and pains related to the condition. Now, two years later, she is still taking Aloe Vera and says that she is feeling better and fitter than she ever did before.

\*Names have been changed for privacy

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