

The Components of the Aloe Leaf

by Dr Peter Atherton taken from www.positivehealth.com

The Components of Aloe Vera can be divided into the following groups:

1. Vitamins

It is rich in all vitamins excluding Vitamin D, especially the antioxidant Vitamins A (beta-carotene), C and E and even contains a trace of Vitamin B12, one of the very few plant sources of this vitamin. This is important for vegetarians and vegans

2. Enzymes

Several different types of these biochemical catalysts when taken orally aid digestion by breaking down fat and sugars.

One in particular, Bradykinase, helps to reduce excessive inflammation when applied to the skin topically and therefore reduces pain, whereas others help digest any dead tissues in wounds. Lipases and proteases which break down foods and aid digestion are present

3. Minerals

Calcium, Sodium Potassium, Manganese, Magnesium, Copper, Zinc, Chromium and the anti-oxidant Selenium. Although minerals and trace elements are only needed in very small quantities, they are essential for the proper functioning of various enzyme systems in different metabolic pathways.

4. Sugars

These are derived from the mucilage layer of the plant which surrounds the inner gel and are known as mucopolysaccharides, which enhance the immune system and help to detoxify. Aloe Vera contains both mono and polysaccharides, but the most important are the long chain sugars involving glucose and mannose or the gluco-mannans which I have already referred to. These sugars are ingested whole from the gut, not broken down like other sugars, and appear in the blood stream in exactly the same form. This process is known as pinocytosis. Once in the blood stream they are able to exert their immunoregulating effect. Some of these polysaccharides are not absorbed but stick to certain cells lining the gut and form a barrier preventing absorption of unwanted materials so helping to prevent a "leaking" gut syndrome. In topical preparations the sugars are also the main moisturizers

5. Anthraquinones

There are twelve of these Phenolic compounds which are found exclusively in the plant sap. In small quantities, when they do not exert their purgative effect, they aid absorption from the gastro-intestinal tract and have anti-microbial and pain killing effect. In some commercial health drinks, the anthraquinones are removed because of the fear of producing abdominal pain or diarrhea, but I feel that they are actually beneficial in small amounts. The important ones, Aloin and Emodin, act as painkillers. They also function as anti-bacterials and anti-viral

6. Lignin

This in its self is an inert substance but when included in topical preparations it endows Aloe Vera with a singular penetrative effect so the other ingredients are absorbed into the skin.

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7. Saponins

These soapy substances form about 3% of the Aloe Vera gel and are capable of cleansing, having antiseptic properties. These acts powerfully as anti-microbial against bacteria, viruses, fungi and yeasts.

8. Fatty Acids

Cholesterol, Campesterol, b. Sisosterol and lupeol.

These four plant steroids are important anti-inflammatory agents

9. Salicylic Acid

An aspirin-like compound possessing anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties.

10. Amino Acids

The body needs 22 amino acids-the gel provides 20 of these. More importantly, it provides 7 out of the 8 essential amino acids which the body cannot synthesis.

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