

Aloe Vera **(Topical Gel)**

Latin name: *Aloe barbadensis*, *A. vera*, *A. vulgaris*, *A. ferox*
Family: Liliaceae

Miscellaneous:

- Fresh aloe is irrefutably the most effective form of this herb to use. Various “preparations” of aloe are harnessed via numerous methods and treatments which may degrade the medicinal/active components.
- The concentrations of active compounds in commercial preparations has tremendous variation.
- Gel is the inner gel-like portion of the leaf, not the liquid (juice) or yellow layer directly beneath the epidermis of the foliage.
- When growing, it should be noted that care must be taken not to over-water the plant, as it excels in an arid environment.
- When cultivating, the leaf can be cut open, revealing the colorless gel that may then be harvested.

Uses:

Aid in healing burns, frostbite, and wounds.

Mechanism:

Exact mechanism is unknown. However, aloe gel does contain carboxypeptidase and bradykininase (enzymes that relieve pain and inflammation). A polysaccharide mucilage is responsible for the majority of the gel's composition. This mucilage primarily contains acidic galacturonans, glucomannans, and neutral polysaccharides.¹ One clinical study verified that fresh gel applied topically promotes attachment and growth of cells. A comparison to a commercial product, however, produced opposing results, as a toxic effect to identical cells was recorded.¹ In the past few years, reports of success with commercial products have begun to build, as well. However, it is by far the best approach to use fresh herb.

*It should be noted that aloe gel has been proven to contain antifungal and antibacterial properties, though the chemicals responsible for this therapeutic implication have not been identified.

Dosage:

Sufficient quantity to cover affected area and applied up to 5 times daily.

Contraindications/Side effects:

Some reports site burning sensations.

Citation References:

1. Tyler, V., Robbers, J.: *Tyler's Herbs of Choice: The Therapeutic Use of Phytomedicinals*: 1999, pp. 216-219.

General References:

1. Tyler, V., Robbers, J.: *Tyler's Herbs of Choice: The Therapeutic Use of Phytomedicinals*: 1999, pp. 216-219.
2. Facts And Comparisons: *Guide To Popular Natural Products*: 1999, pp. 7-8.
3. Duke, J.: *Dr. Duke's Essential Herbs*: 1999, pp. 232.
4. Duke, J.: *The Green Pharmacy*: 1997, pp. 128-129.