

Aloe vera: A boon to mankind

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The medicinal plant Aloe vera is a boon to mankind as it provides cures to common problems relating to digestion, skin, nutrition and in the treatment of various other ailments. As there are over 300 species of Aloe plant, there are a wide variety of Aloe products available in the market; however, the important thing to consider is that only a few species of Aloe vera provide medicinal and healing properties. For instance, *A. barbadensis* Mill. is widely used for its health benefits and application in the treatment of burns, wound healing, lowering blood sugar levels in diabetics as well as improving the immune system. Medicinal Aloe varieties consist of various important chemicals and alkaloids, such as lupeol, salicylic acid, phenols and cinnamic acid. Aloe is considered the healer plant because it has the ability to speed up wound healing by increasing the amount and cross-linking of collagen in the wound, thereby accelerating the rate of re-epithelialisation of the wound. It also helps in improving the blood circulation to the area and preventing cell death around the area of the wound. As the Aloe plant is a rich source of antioxidants and vitamins, it helps protect the skin from harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation. According to reports and statistics provided by the government and multinational companies, there are lakhs of Aloe vera products produced each day for various purposes, such as cosmetics, digestive problems, hair treatments, etc. However, regulatory agencies need to authenticate the claims and ensure that the products contain beneficial bio-active chemicals. Research is still going on to explore the exceptional healing properties and develop more innovative applications of the Aloe plant.

Keywords: Aloe barbadensis Mill., Antiseptic, Wound healing, Lupeol, Salicylic acid, Re-epithelialisation

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