

ANATOMY OF AN INGREDIENT - Aloe vera.(Features)

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THE ALOE plant consists of around 400 different species, and was first originated in Africa. The type of Aloe grown commercially in America (North and South), Asia, Africa, Australasia and southern Europe, is the Aloe Barbadosensis Miller plant, known as aloe vera - Latin for "true aloe".

This exceptional plant contains a wide range of amino-acids, enzymes, minerals, vitamins and other micronutrients. The sap of the aloe contains substances called anthraquinones that have antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, analgesic and anaesthetic properties. It boosts the immune system, provides antioxidant vitamins A, C and E, helps healing, lubricates joints, and is an effective tonic.

Aloe vera can be used on the skin, to treat rashes, sunburn, dermatitis, eczema and psoriasis. It can also be taken internally, and is useful for conditions like colitis, arthritis, IBS, asthma, and chronic fatigue. Opt for aloe vera products that are listed as 98-99 per cent pure, as these will be higher in the protective mucopolysaccharides that have a healing effect on the gut.

Aloe vera can also be used in combination with other substances - for example, glucosamine for joint support, and in personal care products such as toothpaste, soap and shampoo. And, as aloe vera gel is plant-based, it contains no animal products like lanolin, or chemicals like parabens that are used as a preservative, and can cause allergies.

For more information on aloe vera and its health-enhancing properties, 'Aloe Vera: Nature's Silent Healer', by Alasdair Barcroft and Dr Audun Myskja, is published by BAAM Publishing priced pounds 16.95. Call 020-8875 9915 to order a copy