

Health juice 'danger' for mums-to-be.(News)

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A POPULAR health drink was at the centre of a medical controversy last night amid claims that it could cause pregnant women to abort their babies.

Shops and mail order firms sell millions of bottles of the juice extracted from the leaf of aloe vera - a desert plant related to the cactus.

It is said to be highly-effective at relieving such conditions as irritable bowel syndrome, colitis, ulcers and hiatus hernia.

But scientists have discovered that many so-called pure aloe drinks also contain aloin which can lead to serious stomach upsets and cause pregnant women to miscarry.

A major clinical trial on aloe vera and its effects is now being carried out by doctors at two London hospitals

Last night trading standards officers from Surrey said they had mounted an investigation into the aloin content of all 100 aloe vera juice brands on sale in Britain.

A spokesman said they had received a complaint about the labelling and contents of several aloe vera products.

Independent lab tests on two of the leading brands found high levels of aloin in their juice when they claimed to be aloin free.

Currently there is no limit in Britain on the level of aloin in aloe vera.

Aloin is present in the aloe vera leaf but 20 years ago producers discovered it was an irritant and started to reduce its levels.

Bill Coates, a Texan millionaire who developed a way of separating out the aloin said: "You don't want lots of aloin in your juice.

"It can give you a violent stomach upset and there is a risk to a woman who is pregnant."