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# Newsletter

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## Are You Just a Mechanism?

In school you learned that human body was divided into different parts. The mouth, esophagus, stomach and intestines made up the digestive system. The bones made up the skeletal system. And so on. This has contributed to the widely-held belief that you and I are merely a collection of parts, a belief that stands in the way of better health. It's responsible for:

**Isolation:** Incorrectly thinking that organs and tissues operate independently of each other rather than together as part of an integrated whole.

**Mechanism:** The belief that we're simply a collection of parts in which identical inputs (drugs) should produce identical results in all subjects.

We chiropractors go beyond mechanism to embrace what's called vitalism:

**Wholism:** Each "part" has a purpose that contributes to the whole.

**Intelligence:** You and I can learn, create and adapt to our environment.

**Self-healing:** Cut your finger and your body can heal it. Mechanisms can't.

Since the nervous system regulates these vital processes, chiropractic care is the centerpiece of the growing interest in vitalism.

## The Healing Power of Aloe Vera.

A little over a decade ago, products began to spring up on grocers' shelves advertising, "Now includes aloe vera". It became a kind of "branding shorthand" to tell the consumer that this product would be more gentle on the skin; some may have even thought that it would improve skin conditions. Everything from baby wipes and shampoo to toilet paper was suddenly touting its inclusion of this miracle gel.

Yet, was it just a marketing ploy? After all, aloe vera has been used for thousands of years to heal wounds and treat burns, and current research says it can do much more.

### What is Aloe Vera?

Aloe vera is a cactus-like succulent plant that is generally native to Africa. There are actually over 250 different species of aloes in the world but the most commonly known is the aloe barbadensis, or as we know it, aloe vera.

This plant contains in its leaves a thick gooey substance called mucilaginous juice. The aloe vera mucilage is a thick, sticky substance that has been known to contain many healing properties.

### What are the benefits?

Aloe vera's mucilage is an extremely thick gel, thus it will quickly adhere to and dry over a cut, acting as a natural bandage. For this

## Do Kids Have Bad Backs?

I couldn't help but notice there was a child out in your reception room. Why would a child need to see a chiropractor?" The idea that children, even newborns, would see us to get adjusted is a stretch for some. How would a child benefit?

Birth trauma. All childbirth methods can take a toll on a baby's spine.

Colic. Many babies experience extraordinary relief with chiropractic care.

Ear infections. Tension in the upper spine can affect the inner ear.

Children enjoy adjustments, and most respond quickly. They rarely have the scar tissue that we often see in adults with long-standing problems. And resolving problems early can avoid problems later on.

same reason, and due to its anti-inflammatory properties, it quickly soothes all types of burns, from accidents in the kitchen to sunburns. Of course, these are the commonly known uses for the aloe vera plant's gel, there are several other benefits.

For instance, aloe vera gel can bring quick relief to mosquito or similar insect bites due to its being a natural cooling agent and anti-inflammatory. Also, the symptoms of some skin conditions, such as eczema and psoriasis, can be relieved with aloe vera gel and generally any type of dry skin condition will benefit.

The gel has also been used orally in dentistry for relief following periodontal surgery and, after an extraction, aloe vera has been reported to help protect against dry socket. Mouth lesions may also be improved and aloe vera may bring relief from swelling caused by dentures, trauma from dental work, irritation from brushing, as well as toothpick or dental floss injuries.

Aloe vera can also be ingested and has been used for over 50 years as a natural laxative. A lesser known benefit is relief from digestion issues such as irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, stomach ulcers and esophageal damage. Of course, it's important to consult with a healthcare professional before using it internally so as to avoid improper dosing.

## Why is it so beneficial?

Aloe vera stimulates the immune system. It's a powerful anti-inflammatory, a natural analgesic and able to speed up cell growth due to the large number of nutrients, vitamins, amino and fatty acids it contains. Including over 130 active compounds, vitamins E, C, B1, 2, 3 and 6, iron, manganese, calcium and zinc, along with 24 amino acids that are beneficial to the skin, aloe vera is one of the most "nutritionally alive plants on earth".

The Mayo Clinic points out that the mucilage (transparent gel) from the pulp of the leaves has been used topically for thousands of years to treat wounds, skin infections, burns and numerous other skin conditions, while the dried latex (inner lining of the leaf) has also had proven health benefits.

## The Squeaky Wheel Gets the Grease

We all recognize this old saying, and it's never truer than when it comes to our health. If we shut down the awareness to our body's own cries for change, our body cries louder.

And Louder.

AND LOUDER!

Until we finally listen and take the action to make some important changes.

That's often what we see when new patients begin care in our practice with an obvious ache or pain.

First, they often just try to grin and bear it, figuring the problem will go away all by itself.

When the problem doesn't self-resolve, they often up the ante, suppressing the pain with over-the-counter medications.

While this may seem convenient, it merely prolongs the day when the underlying cause must inevitably be addressed.

Just as Einstein observed that problems are never solved at the same level that created them, they call us.

Wise move.

Funny how so many people claim they don't have the time for healthy habits and preventative measures, but when they lose their health, they somehow find it!

Listen to your body. What's it telling you?

## Can I grow one?

Although it is not actually part of the cactus family, aloe vera is similar in being a succulent and consisting of 95% water. This means that this plant will not survive a cold, frosty winter. For those living in warm, desert climates, aloe vera will do just fine outside with the occasional watering as long as it's planted in light shade or an area where it will get some sun throughout the day.

For those living in areas where it gets cold and may frost, this plant can be grown in a pot indoors. Due to the plant's popularity it can be purchased at almost any nursery or garden shop and can be grown indoors in the same pot provided when purchased. Placed in a window sill or near a window that allows a fair amount of sun this plant will flourish. It's also okay to take it outside during the summer months.

The best pots for this plant, and likely the pot it's purchased in, will have holes in the bottom to allow the excess water to escape. Since it is a succulent it will rot if it has too much water at the roots.

## How do I care for my plant?

Much like a cactus this plant stores a lot of water in its leaves and root system. This means that it doesn't need frequent watering. During the winter it will actually become somewhat dormant.

When the plant is dormant allow the soil to become completely dry before giving it a cup or two of water. During the summer months the soil should be completely soaked but then allowed to dry out before being completely soaked again. Remember to make sure that the pot has a way for the excess water to drain out the bottom.

Once the plant is too big for its pot it can be repotted, but take care to use a wider pot instead of a deeper one since aloe plants have a shallow root system. If repotting isn't really an option, be sure to remove the offshoots regularly so as to avoid overtaxing the mother plant. If desired, these offshoots can be replanted in their own pots.

It's important to note that at times the leaves will turn a brown color either when they've been in direct sunlight too long or are over-watered. If you know it's been in direct, bright sunlight for too long then move it to a place where it will get indirect sunlight and will be shaded part of the day. If you know it's been over-watered then it should be put outside in the sun, if possible, to help it to dry out.

## Are You Just Coasting?

When it comes to your health, do you keep on top of it or are you just coasting?

After taking the necessary action to recover your health, it's tempting to take it easy and just coast. But that's a common way to invite a relapse of your original problem. Why?

Imagine that your goal is to participate in a 10K run. To get in shape, you run every day. When race day arrives, you're able to run the full 10K without stopping. If you were to stop training, would you expect your ability to successfully run a 10K race remain with you the rest of your life?

Of course not.

Spinal health is like that. You may get chiropractic care to alleviate pain or deal with a particular health issue, and you are dedicated to the process... until you feel better. That's like the 10K race day!

But discontinuing your care once you feel better interrupts the healing process and amounts to coasting. Like running, those results won't remain with you for the rest of your life if you quit now. In fact, the most lasting changes occur with continued care after symptoms subside.

Are you coasting? Do you know someone who is? No problem. Just remember, we'll be here to help when you're ready to start pedaling again!

It is a very hardy plant and should survive a few mishaps before finding the best place for it to grow.

## What about bottled aloe vera gel?

Avoid imitators. The best aloe vera is going to come straight from the plant. If that's not possible then go to your local whole food or health food store and find pure aloe vera. Do not go to your local corner store and purchase a bottle of "aloe vera gel" because it will be less aloe vera and more chemicals and alcohol.

Some of the most common brands of "aloe vera gel" do contain aloe barbadensis leaf juice, but it isn't the highest item on the ingredients list. Typically after water you will find SD alcohol 40 (a fast drying solvent), glycerin (a chemical moisturizer), polysorbate 20 (a wetting agent or emulsifier), carbomer (a polymer or a thickening and stabilizing agent), triethanolamine (an emulsifier or preservative), methylparaben (a fungicide or preservative), imidazolidinyl urea (an antimicrobial preservative), artificial colors and fragrances.

When purchasing any bottle of aloe vera gel be sure to read the ingredients carefully, as even those that are 99.5% aloe vera gel may include sodium benzoate and other preservatives.

## In Summary

As a wellness practitioner, your family wellness chiropractor wants you to make the best choices when caring for your families, and the aloe vera plant can and should be in every home. It is the most natural and effective way to relieve pain from burns, to heal cuts or scrapes and offers a myriad of other health benefits.