

BAG SNOB

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ALOE JUICE: WHY YOU SHOULDN'T BUY INTO THIS INSTAGRAM TREND

by Sharon Feiereisen



If you follow health/wellness accounts on social media your feed has probably been flooded with posts about aloe vera juice. I was curious about it after trying it. It tastes pretty gross and the ones that are drinkable are full of added sugars so I was curious if the juice actually has enough health benefits to merit drinking it despite the bad taste. I turned to nutritionist at NutraMilk, Florencia Tagliavini, to find out. One thing is for sure – don't trust everything you see on your feed!

What is aloe vera?

“Aloe vera, is a succulent plant that grows naturally in dry, tropical climates in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the southern and western parts of the United States and has been used for centuries as a medicinal plant. More commonly known for it's gel that is used to soothe, moisturize skin and and help minor burns or irritation heal. Various studies confirm that when used topically, aloe vera has has antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, and analgesic properties. “

What is aloe juice?

"Aloe juice involves crushing, grinding or pressing of the entire leaf of the aloe vera plant to produce a liquid, followed by various steps of filtrations and stabilization. According to the "International Aloe Science Council" there are two primary types of processed raw ingredients used in commercially available aloe vera products:

- Decolorized or purified aloe vera leaf juice (sometimes also referred to as "whole leaf").
- Unpurified leaf juice containing high levels of the latex (the bitter, yellow sap found between the rind and the inner leaf material).

There is concern about the various methods of improper processing which result in very little or virtually no active ingredients which provide all the benefits of the aloe plant." Most of these juices are diluted, mixed with other juices to improve the particular taste of the aloe vera. Some are full of added sugars and additives. One of the health perks the aloe vera plant is the high vitamin C content which is thought to be responsible for some of its healing properties but most of that content is lost during processing, so another form of vitamin C is added back to the juice afterwards.

More and more brands of aloe vera juice are flooding the aisles at the health food store and even regular grocery stores. These claim to help improve liver function, relieve heartburn, alleviate IBS and other digestive conditions, lower your blood sugar, boost nutrition, hydration and more. While a few of these claims may have a bit of research behind them- this is no miracle juice nor even a nutritional powerhouse, how some may think. Most of the benefits of aloe are linked to the plant itself and its topical application."

So are there any benefits when it comes to drinking aloe juice?

"Some claims have research behind them so let's take a look:

A few studies show it can help with some digestive issues such as reflux/heartburn and ulcerative colitis. It may also help with constipation, thanks to a substance called "aloe latex", which is the juice that comes from just under the skin of the plant and has a potent laxative effect. However, it can also cause cramping and diarrhea so it's best to consult with a health professional. There is also some preliminary research that drinking aloe juice, can help lower cholesterol and blood sugar levels in people with Type 2 diabetes. Of course, there is also other more effective and natural ways to treat digestive issues and to manage diabetes. It's also best to hydrate with water and get all the vitamins and minerals you need from foods that are more nutrient dense."

Are there any possible side effects?

“Aloe juice has been shown to interact with certain medications so if you are taking any medication check with your doctor first before consuming aloe juice. If you have diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, or intestinal problems you should also consult with your doctor before taking this juice as a supplement. One study, showed that one of the raw ingredients from aloe, the non-decolorized/unpurified, whole-leaf aloe extract contains a chemical called aloin, which has been shown to cause cancer in rats. If and when you buy aloe juice, make sure you pay attention to the quality of the juice. Buy organic, purified, decolorized and safety tested. Take a look at the nutrition label to make sure it does not contain extra calories or added sugars and look at the ingredients to make sure it does not contain extra additives.”

Bottom line: “Aloe Vera is not a miracle drink, it’s not a nutritional powerhouse. If it sounds too good to be true- it probably is! The majority of the claims are just not supported by evidence.”

Image: Vogue

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