

## Does Aloe Vera Help Digestive Issues?

For BigVits ([www.bigvits.com](http://www.bigvits.com))

### What is aloe vera?

Aloe vera is a cactus-like plant that grows in dry climates and conditions. There are two parts of the plant, the gel from inside the leaves and the latex. The latex is found in the fibre underneath the leaves. The gel is the most used part of the plant, often as a popular ingredient in skin care, hand sanitisers, and cosmetics. Both the gel and the latex are used in a variety of supplements in tablet, liquid, and capsule form [\(1\)](#).

Aloe vera is used for its soothing properties, such as for sunburn. But, the claims for Aloe vera helping with digestive issues are not as clear. The three main digestive issues are constipation, diarrhoea, and gas:

- Constipation (including bloating as a symptom) is the most common digestive issue. This impacts around 1 in 7 adults in the UK [\(2\)](#).
- Diarrhoea impacts around 1 in 5 people per year in the UK [\(3\)](#).
- Gas affects people daily, but consistently foul smelling gas impacts many people (statistics unknown).

In this article, I am going to provide an overview of the evidence for aloe vera to help with these three common digestive issues.

### Does aloe vera help with constipation?

Constipation signs include [\(2\)](#):

- Going more than three days between bowel movements
- Dry or lumpy stools
- Straining and pain when passing a bowel movement
- Feeling like bowel movements are never complete

Constipation has many possible causes. Including low fibre intake, not drinking enough water, and spending a lot of time sitting down. Constipation can also be due to medical conditions so it's important to speak with your GP to rule things out.

Aloe vera is often claimed to be a remedy for constipation in health magazines and on websites. However, research to back this up is ultimately lacking.

A 2021 randomised controlled trial (RCT) looked at the effect of aloe vera on constipation. An RCT is the gold-standard of quality in research where people are put in a control group or a treatment group. This RCT found no difference in constipation between those who took aloe

vera versus those who didn't [\(1\)](#). The study was limited because the study was small. Therefore, more research should be completed in larger amounts of people.

A 2019 RCT investigated the effect of a prebiotic on constipation. A prebiotic is a mix of insoluble fibres that humans can't digest, but gut microbes can digest. This may offer beneficial health effects that support digestion [\(1\)](#). The prebiotic contained less than 4% aloe vera, and the rest was a mix of inulin and lactitol. Constipation was measured by stool consistency, completeness, and time taken in the bathroom. There was no difference in constipation in those who took the supplement. No one's constipation in the supplement group became worse. But in the non-supplement group, 5% of people's constipation did become worse [\(4\)](#).

An RCT from 1991 looked at a supplement containing aloe vera, psyllium husk, and celandin. Those taking the supplement had softer and less painful stools. They also had less laxative dependence in the 28-day study period. But stomach pain from cramping did not improve. This suggests that the supplement did not reduce intestine spasms [\(5\)](#). Results from this study are limited because the amount of aloe vera in the supplement is unknown. Future research is needed with aloe vera only before any recommendations can be made.

A 2018 review found that aloe vera reduced the time people took in the bathroom. It also reduced the difficulty of passing a bowel movement, and resulted in softer stools [\(6\)](#). All the studies in this review were at the longest 5 months. Therefore the longer term use of aloe vera is not known. The studies also used different forms of aloe vera, including tablets and juice. There were also differing doses and supplement types in the studies. The study with the highest constipation improvement had a high drop-out rate in those not taking the supplement. This may have skewed the results to suggest aloe vera has a more positive effect than it did.

### **How do I manage constipation without aloe vera?**

NICE Guidelines (evidence-based recommendations for health and care in England) suggest self-management strategies before booking an appointment with your GP [\(2\)](#). Strategies include:

- Dietary changes, such as drinking more water, and slowly adding in more high-fibre foods per day
- Improving your toilet routine. Such as resting your feet on a stool and taking enough time in the bathroom
- Working towards some form of daily movement such as a daily walk

If these lifestyle strategies do not prove helpful, you should speak with your GP. You may be offered very short-term laxatives. If constipation persists, you may be referred to a gastroenterology clinic [\(2\)](#).

## **Does aloe vera help with Diarrhoea?**

Diarrhoea is when stools are loose, and is often caused by stomach bugs or food poisoning. Most bouts of diarrhoea will pass after 5-7 days. Some people may have diarrhoea regularly, due to conditions like irritable bowel syndrome. Aloe vera is often claimed to be a remedy for diarrhoea.

However, there is no research suggesting this is the case. In fact, aloe vera can actually cause diarrhoea. This is because aloe vera has a natural laxative effect due to the latex in the leaves.

## **How do I manage diarrhoea without aloe vera?**

Diarrhoea usually passes on its own. General hygiene and drinking plenty of fluids is the usual treatment. If diarrhoea persists for more than 7 days, you should speak to your GP [\(3\)](#).

## **Does aloe vera help with Gas?**

Gas is often a topic that makes people feel slightly uncomfortable. But actually gas is very normal. However, excess or foul smelling gas can suggest constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, or lactose intolerance.

Aloe vera juice and tea are claimed to stop gas after meals and act as a "massage" to the colon. However, there appears to be no evidence from research studies to support this. Therefore aloe vera cannot be said to help with gas.

Gas is often a symptom of constipation. So it would be worth trying the management suggestions in the constipation section. Other ways to manage diarrhoea include:

- Drink, and chew food slower
- Notice how certain foods affect your body e.g. higher-fat or fried foods
- Try gentle movement, like stretches that twist your body

## **Summary of the evidence**

Based on the evidence, aloe vera does not seem to be a stand-alone remedy for digestive issues. Aloe vera appears to have potential to help short-term constipation. However, aloe vera is unlikely to be a remedy on its own. The current evidence is limited due to small sample sizes, and limited number of studies.

NICE Guidelines do not recommend aloe vera for constipation. This is due to the unknown long-term effects aloe vera may have [\(7\)](#).

As for diarrhoea, aloe vera is not a suitable remedy - It can cause diarrhoea due to the latex in aloe vera.

There is no evidence that aloe vera can relieve gas. However, aloe vera may be effective at helping with constipation which is a common cause of gas.

### **Is aloe vera safe for everyone?**

- Those with kidney damage should avoid supplements due to the latex content of aloe vera.
- Those who are pregnant or breastfeeding are suggested not to take aloe vera. This is because the impact on the fetus is unknown.
- Taking aloe vera supplements regularly can cause dehydration due to the laxative effect.
- Those with diabetes should not take aloe vera as it interferes with blood sugar. It can also interfere with diabetes medications.
- Those who take warfarin are not recommended to take aloe vera. This is because aloe vera can increase blood thinning.

### **Product recommendations:**

1. <https://bigvits.co.uk/product/aloe-vera-10000mg-x-100sgels/> There is no recommended dose. This is the only aloe vera in capsule/tablet form on the website.
2. <https://bigvits.co.uk/product/aloe-vera-concentrate-4-oz-118ml/> This is a liquid aloe vera. This may be helpful for those who don't want to take capsules.

### References

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