



## Is This Ancient Skincare Hero In Your Beauty Arsenal?

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The deep and vibrant history of using plants for their medicinal and therapeutic benefits goes back for millennia. Unfortunately, in the era of science and smartphones, much of society has lost interest in such applications. Yet a few plants remain an exception to this — especially aloe vera.

It's remained a ubiquitous household staple, whether conveniently placed in the kitchen in case of minor burns or perched in the bathroom to soothe tired skin on a whim. Many of us are familiar with that “snap” and the cool, viscous green pulp — botanical gold, if you will — that seeps out of the plump leaf.

“Aloe vera, or aloe barbadensis, has been used as a popular skin care product since antiquity,” says Jeanette M. Black, a board-certified dermatologist based in Beverly Hills, Calif. “Dioscorides, an ancient Greek physician, cited aloe vera’s ability to alleviate skin irritation, sunburns, and acne around 70 B.C. In ancient Egypt, [it’s believed that] Cleopatra and Nefertiti included aloe vera in their daily skin care routines, and Alexander the Great was reported to have used aloe vera to help heal war wounds.”

Through the centuries, aloe vera’s popularity has remained unwavering — and for good reason. Its resume reads like an unequivocal skincare hero: antimicrobial, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant. It has been found to expedite wound-healing and soothe sunburns, improve hydration, assists in treating acne, and can give inflammatory skin conditions — such as psoriasis and eczema — a run for their money.

“[Most] skin types can benefit from [topical application of] aloe vera,” says [Dr. Michelle Yagoda](#), a cosmetic facial plastic surgeon based out of New York City. “It is especially perfect

for anyone with oily skin because it moisturizes without leaving an overly greasy residue, and [you] can use it after shaving to heal minor cuts.”

Though raw usage remains commonplace, aloe is also a favorite among cosmetic chemists. Countless formulations including the ingredient exist, each boasting their own array of benefits. Even if you keep a living aloe plant in your home, there’s no denying the convenience or potency of an already-formulated product. Typically, you’ll find the ingredient listed as aloe juice, aloe extract, or aloe powder, and sometimes all three will even be present.

Take K-Beauty brand Benton® Aloe Propolis Soothing Gel (\$16), for example. It shines a light on the succulent by front-loading the ingredient list with aloe and adding propolis, cucumber, and camellia to the mix. It's specifically formulated for acne-prone skin types to help heal and soothe breakouts.

Youth To The People™ adds even more greenery in the Superfood Peptide Eye Cream (\$35), a skin-nourishing salad of kale, spinach, green tea, alfalfa, and aloe vera. A few dabs under tired eyes will help plump, firm, and hydrate. Also noteworthy is BBROWBAR® Aloe Vera Gel (\$35), a chic jar of decolorized aloe vera pulp that’s been mixed with wheat proteins and

enriched with panthenol (vitamin B5) for a simplified, but still potent, facial moisturizer. Finally, Herbivore® Botanicals offers a handful of aloe-doused goodies, including the After Sun Body Mist (\$16), a lovely blend of aloe, mint, lavender, and witch hazel; Post Shave Elixir (\$25), and the irresistibly pretty Pink Cloud Rosewater Moisture Cream (\$48), which marries rosewater and aloe water with white tea extract, kukui oil, rice extract, and hyaluronic acid.

But keep in mind that as with any skincare ingredient, there’s always a possibility that you and aloe may not get along, notes Dr. Black.

“No matter what formulation is used, it is important to remember that there is always a risk of developing a possible allergic reaction to aloe vera or other ingredients in the product,” she says. “Make sure to seek advice from a board-certified dermatologist if a reaction occurs.” That’s pretty valuable advice for anytime your skin is behaving oddly. Hopefully, though, you’re able to relish in the array of benefits that aloe vera has to offer — just like Nefertiti and the common folk who’ve come after her.