

# ALOES

(*Aloe ferox*)

## Clinical Summary

### Actions

- Stimulant laxative
- Bitter tonic
- Choleric
- Chologogue
- Emmenagogue
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antimicrobial

### Indications

- Occasional constipation, recognising that constipation may be the result of something else and not the initial cause that this has to be sought and dealt with.

### Traditional and Empirical Use

Aloes leaf exudate was first exported from South Africa in 1761. It is mainly used in the Eastern and Western Cape provinces of South Africa to treat constipation. The centuries-old local tradition of sustainably gathering leaves for this purpose continues in South Africa today.

### Energetics

Bitter, cold.

### Constituents

Anthraquinones, including glycosides such as barbaloin (aloin), isobarbaloin and emodin and free anthraquinones (aglycones) such as aloe-emodin, anthranol and chrysophanic acid. It also contains resins, aloesin, chromones, anthrones, phenolic compounds, flavonoids, tannins, steroids and alkaloids

### Use in Pregnancy

Strong laxatives are not advised in pregnancy, especially the first trimester. Aloes has a griping and abortifacient effect and should therefore not be used in pregnancy. Use caution during lactation.

### Contraindications and Cautions

Strong laxatives are contraindicated in children under 10. Due to the irritating effects of its anthraquinone constituents, aloes latex is contraindicated in individuals with gastrointestinal obstruction, acute intestinal inflammation, ulcers, abdominal pain of unknown origin, severe dehydration states (with water and electrolyte depletion), nausea and vomiting. Theoretically, taking aloes latex orally might exacerbate kidney disorders. Avoid excessive use and long-term use (more than two weeks), as potassium losses may occur, which may alter cardiac electrophysiology.

### Drug Interactions

**Stimulant laxatives:** Theoretically, aloes latex might increase the risk for fluid and electrolyte loss when taken with stimulant laxatives. Additive effects are theoretically possible inducing griping pains. Use with caution.

**Digoxin:** Overuse of aloes latex can increase the risk of adverse effects from cardiac glycoside drugs, such as digoxin, due to potassium depletion. Overuse of aloes, along with cardiac glycoside drugs, can increase the risk of toxicity.

**Diuretics:** Theoretically, overuse of aloes latex might compound diuretic-induced potassium loss, increasing the risk of hypokalaemia.

**Warfarin:** Aloes latex has stimulant laxative effects. In some people aloes latex can cause diarrhoea. Diarrhoea can increase the effects of warfarin, increase international normalised ratio (INR), and increase the risk of bleeding.

**Liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) and Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*):** Theoretically, the laxative effects of aloes latex may increase the risk of potassium depletion.

### Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:30 in 50% alcohol  
15 to 60mL weekly