

GoodHealth

By PAT HAGAN

A DRINK made from the aloe vera plant is helping patients control the symptoms of ulcerative colitis, a disease that affects the bowels.

The plant, best known as a remedy for sunburn, appears to have healing properties for inflammation in the gut.

Patients who suffered years of discomfort without relief from conventional medicines claim to be free of symptoms after drinking a tiny amount of the juice every day.

Their testimonies support British research last year which showed one in three sufferers experienced an improvement after drinking the plant solution.

Ulcerative colitis is a condition where the lining of the bowel becomes inflamed and ulcerated. Symptoms include bloody stools, diarrhoea and abdominal pain.

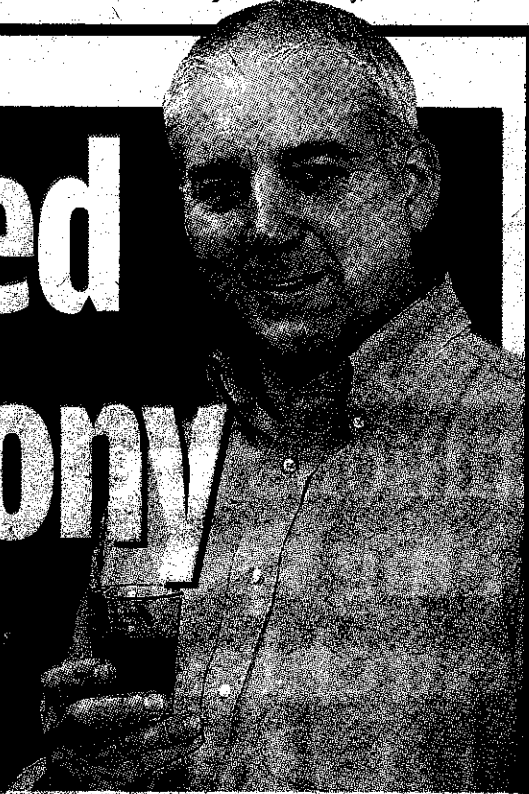
Up to 120,000 people in the UK are affected and many suffer unwanted weight loss because the colon empties itself so frequently. The disease can cause rashes, damage the liver and trigger inflammation of the eyes.

Earlier this year, agony aunt Virginia Ironside told how the disease had affected her for more than 30 years. It left her weak and needing the toilet 10 times a day.

The most common form of treatment is steroids to control the inflammation, or a drug called sulfasalazine, which slows the progression of the disease. But

Plant juice ended my stomach agony

One tiny glass of Aloe Vera a day could banish colitis symptoms



Cured: Andy Woodward no longer suffers painful cramps

long-term use of steroids can have nasty side-effects, including mood swings and increased appetite.

During one bout of steroid treatment, Ironside claimed to have put on a stone-and-a-half in four weeks as she craved food.

For centuries, the plant that provides aloe vera has been used in complementary medicine.

'I noticed some of my patients were using it,' said Professor David Rampton, a specialist in gastroenterology at the Royal London Hospital. 'I was unhappy about the fact that they were using something without any clinical trial data to support its use.'

He set up a trial in which 44 patients with ulcerative colitis were given an aloe vera drink or a placebo. Of the 30 who drank aloe

vera juice, nine went into remission and 11 noticed an improvement in symptoms. In the placebo group, one patient went into remission and another saw an improvement in symptoms.

WE ALSO found that bowel tissue improved to a greater extent on the aloe vera than on placebo,' said Professor Rampton. 'But it's important to stress that people were not cured and the aloe vera drink could not replace conventional treatments unless the results are replicated in a bigger study.'

Andy Woodward, from Shipston-

on-Stour in Warwickshire, turned to aloe vera after suffering for several years with painful colitis.

The 40-year-old father of one began to experience problems when the stress of running a travel consultancy began to take its toll.

'I was away from home for more than four months of the year,' says Andy. 'On top of that, there was an awful lot of corporate hospitality, usually involving very rich food.'

'I was meant to be a professional host, but sometimes I would end up lying in the back of the bus doubled up in pain while my clients went off to dinner.'

A change of job simply added to the stress as Andy faced a 170-mile daily commute to London.

He tried over-the-counter remedies, to little effect. 'Nothing

I took made any difference. They never relieved the symptoms, they just postponed them slightly.'

Andy then heard about the aloe vera drink from a company called Forever Living Products. He began downing a sherry-glass full of the drink, which costs between £12 and £18 a carton, each morning.

'Within a couple of weeks I noticed a difference. My morning stomach cramps were gone and I didn't get that knotted feeling anymore when I ate.'

'That was four years ago and the only time I've had problems since has been if I go travelling without it. Within days, my symptoms return.'

■ For more information on aloe vera drinks go to www.foreverliving.com