

# 'Aloe vera changed my life'



**C**laire Grimes was diagnosed with lupus two years ago, when she was 17. From being a slim, vivacious teenager, she became shy and bloated within months, due to the extremely high dose of steroids that she was on.

Claire's problems went back to when she was about 13, with aches and pains and constant tiredness. 'My whole body was so sore that sometimes I would cry with the pain,' she remembers. 'I just wanted to sleep all the time.' Claire's GP, however, could find nothing wrong with her and wrote off her tiredness as 'women's problems'.

Claire's illness meant that she had to take a great deal of time off school, and was falling badly behind with her schoolwork. Her mother Catherine says, 'When I took Claire to the doctor again, he suggested that she might be being bullied, which I knew was out of the question. So I was even more worried.'

By this stage, Claire had had lupus for around six months and was unaware that she was dangerously ill. She had to be carried to and from her bed and her hair was falling out. Eventually, a second GP referred Claire to Stobhill Hospital in Glasgow for tests, which confirmed that Claire had lupus.

'I had never heard of the disease at all,' recalls Claire. 'While the tests were done, I imagined I had MS or cancer. To be told that I had something wrong with me, even though I didn't know what it was, was actually a big relief.'

Claire was put on a mixture of drugs and steroids, including prednisone, Aathioprine, Atenolol, Nivaquine and Zantac. She was told that if her condition

hadn't been diagnosed when it was, her kidneys could have failed.

'At first, I began to improve, and was really happy as the doctors had said to me that lupus was incurable and I had been dangerously ill,' says Claire. 'But then my weight began to creep up. I was a size eight when I was first diagnosed and weighed around seven stone, but I just stopped weighing myself when I was 12 stone. Eventually, I was taking size 16 clothes.'

Claire was also finding it difficult being back at school. 'Most of my friends tried to be kind but some people made comments about my weight, which was really hurtful.'

Then Claire had a breakthrough. Her dad, Frank, had heard about the benefits of aloe vera for treating various illnesses and decided to try it. 'To me, aloe vera was something in shampoo, but we decided that it was worth having a go,' says Frank. 'We bought the aloe vera from a firm called Forever Living.'

Claire started taking the aloe vera juice twice a day and, within a month, she began to feel better. But the doctors could not believe that she had made such an amazing recovery simply by taking aloe vera, so it was only after four months that she was gradually allowed to reduce her massive 60mg daily steroid dose. Following this, she began to lose weight,

**ALOE VERA**, a plant with various natural qualities, is best known for treating skin conditions and easing the heat of burns and itching. Its moisturising properties make it an effective treatment for eczema and psoriasis. It is a rich source of plant steroids, so when drunk or applied to the problem area, aloe can relieve inflammation in conditions such as arthritis and rheumatism. It is also a natural detoxifier, and works throughout the digestive system flushing out dead skin cells and encouraging new cell growth. Its healing evidence is often anecdotal, but it has been known to turn around serious conditions, such as lupus, an auto-immune disease.

To find a good quality product, you need to find a reputable supplier, as both the quality of the plants harvested and the processing will contribute to the overall quality of the product. Check to see if the manufacturer is a member of the International Science Council (IASC) an independent body set up to monitor standards of aloe vera products.

You need to take aloe vera for about three months to give your body time to adjust. Start with a teaspoon or dessertspoon of juice daily, then slowly increase the amount to between two and four tablespoons a day. If you are taking it as a tonic, two small wine glasses a day should help to boost your energy levels and keep colds at bay.

and became her old self again. Her family has now set up a business selling aloe vera, advocating its benefits to thousands of other people. Says Claire, 'I always take my aloe vera regularly - if I miss one day, I feel awful. If someone had said to me a few years ago about aloe vera, I would have laughed - but it's changed my life.'