

Your very good health

Aloe vera saved my skin

Hazel Gauntlett was worried about the effects of radiotherapy... then a humble plant extract came to her rescue

When Hazel Gauntlett, a 50-year-old marketing director from London, was diagnosed with breast cancer in January 1997, she resolved to use complementary medicine alongside the orthodox treatment that had been recommended.

'Following a lumpectomy and removal of my lymph nodes, I was told that the cancer hadn't spread anywhere else but that I'd need radiotherapy daily for six weeks,' she says.

'I've always used various forms of complementary medicine but, in this instance, I felt I had no choice but to opt for the conventional route.

'Even so, I took homoeopathic remedies as well and swallowed masses of vitamins to stay as healthy as I possibly could.'

While she was in hospital, a friend, who'd had surgery for breast cancer

a few months earlier, went to visit her. She warned Hazel that radiotherapy can burn the skin - her own still looked red and sore.

'I was a bit horrified,' says Hazel, 'but I thought: "Well, I've got through everything else, I'll get through this as well."'

As soon as Hazel, who's single, returned home from hospital, her neighbour arrived, carrying a large bottle under her arm.

'She said: "This is instead of a bunch of flowers - and a lot more useful,"' remembers Hazel. 'It was a bottle of aloe vera juice and she told me I should drink it to boost my immune system.'

Hazel began taking the aloe vera twice a day and decided she wanted to learn more about its benefits.

She rang the company which markets the juice and was sent some information. To her surprise, she

Being a natural product, it causes no problems



Hazel toasts her health with aloe vera

read of women who'd used aloe vera to protect their skin during radiotherapy treatment.

Despite the fact that Hazel's cancer specialist told her that she mustn't put anything on her skin during radiotherapy, one of the nurses said that it was fine to use aloe vera gel. So, as well as continuing to drink the juice, Hazel smoothed the gel on to her skin every day.

She'd been told the radiotherapy would cause burning and dry, itchy skin during her six-week treatment, but she suffered no ill effects.

Staff working in the radiotherapy department were amazed. Hazel became known as 'the woman with great skin' and, as a bonus, her energy levels remained high.

- Mirjana Brennan, senior staff

nurse in the radiotherapy department at the Cromwell Hospital in London, where Hazel had her treatment, says: 'A lot of women experience skin reactions with radiotherapy treatment, particularly those with sensitive skin.'

'Until now we haven't been able to use anything for this as it can counteract the radiation. However aloe vera, being a natural product, causes no problems and we're happy to recommend it to

all our patients as it obviously does have an extremely beneficial effect.'

Hazel would like other women undergoing radiotherapy to know that aloe vera can help to avoid the unpleasantness of the treatment.

'It really is an extraordinary plant and it's good for any kind of skin soreness or burning - sunburn, eczema, anything like that.'

'My skin is soft and smooth, despite the fact that I've only just recently completed the radiotherapy treatment. Aloe vera quite literally saved my skin.'

Deborah Dooley