

Honey heaven

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*Great for the gut, lungs, skin, and stamina,
a spoonful of honey makes miraculous medicine,
writes naturopath Caroline Robertson.*
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AT my Indian wedding, guests gave me honeyed milk to ensure sweet nuptials. This ancient elixir was liquid gold to the ancient Egyptians who offered it to the fertility god Min, and used it for embalming. In the Old Testament, King Solomon said “Eat thou honey, for it is good”, and the Qur’an endorses honey as nutritious nectar. Today, scientific research reveals honey’s many therapeutic uses. However, seven bee species are now endangered due to insecticides and fewer flower fields. A dwindling bee population means poor pollination and less food for us: bees’ survival is imperative for our survival. Supporting organic beekeeping, protesting neonicotinoid insecticides, and planting more flowers will all support the bee population.

Milk and honey

Did you know it takes hundreds of bees their lifetime to make your jar of honey? Busy bees first forage flowers for nectar, visiting around two million flowers to create half a kilo of honey! The flower species determines the honey type. Returning to the hive, bees regurgitate nectar repeatedly as it gets partially digested with digestive enzymes, transforming sucrose into a blend of glucose and fructose. It’s then stored in honeycomb cells to ferment as bees flutter their wings to circulate air and evaporate water. Honeycomb is removed from the hive to extract honey and remove wax and debris. Then honey is often heated to kill yeast, but over-processed honey removes many phytonutrients.

Speakers at the First International Symposium on Honey and Human Health revealed that unheated honey has six species of lactobacilli and four species of bifidobacteria and antioxidants. Raw and manuka honey also have more antimicrobial hydrogen peroxide and methylglyoxal to banish infections. The healthiest honey is dark, minimally refined, raw, organic and not heated above 42°C. Manuka honey is the exception, as it retains medicinal UMF (unique manuka factor) even after heating. Though 80 percent sugars, honey also has calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc, manganese, selenium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, vitamins C and B. These nutrients make honey preferable to sugar; plus, it’s twice as sweet as sugar with a better glycaemic index. As Dr Ron Fessenden explains in *The Honey Revolution*, “Honey consumption (as compared to refined sugar) leads directly to the formation of liver glycogen, thus stabilising blood sugar levels. Honey thereby reduces metabolic stress and improves fat metabolism and disposal, thus combating type 2 diabetes and obesity.”

Royal jelly is a superfood produced by bees to transform average bees into queen bees. Only

* Bee your best

Honey is a delicious kitchen cure offering sweet support in the following conditions:

Wound healing Manuka and medi-honey have such powerful anti-microbial properties that doctors apply it to heal infected wounds, burns or ulcers when antibiotics fail. One study found that infected caesarean and hysterectomy wounds treated with manuka had a success rate of 85 percent. A Sydney University study found that some honeys were more effective than antibiotics in treating surface wounds and infections.

Anti-ageing Honey’s astringent and antioxidant properties make it a wonderful facial mask. For a clear complexion or to soothe sunburn, apply honey to dry skin for 10 minutes. Mix with jojoba oil for a moisturising mask.

Cough remedy Honey is a more effective cough suppressant than a pharmaceutical, according to the Archives of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine.

Sore throat soother Honey with propolis is a powerful antibacterial, antiviral and anti-inflammatory, even effective against Strep throat. This popular singer’s remedy comes in spray, lozenge or liquid form.

Ulcer elixir Tummy troubles cause acidity, ulcers, bad breath, and indigestion. Manuka, jarrah or jellybush honey can heal them by eliminating the *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria often implicated. It also

encourages ‘good’ gut bacteria, reducing the risk of irritable bowel syndrome.

Immune stimulant Packed with prebiotics, probiotics and antioxidants, some honey every day keeps the doctor away.

Skin tonic Eczema, acne, rosacea and rashes are eased by honey balms. Skin is softer and smoother from honey’s humectant action, which attracts water.

Periodontal potion Rubbing manuka honey on gums or gargling after brushing reduces plaque and bacteria, so allaying decay and throat infections. Honey is also used for throat inflammation associated with reflux, oesophageal cancer and chemotherapy, as approved by the National Cancer Institute.

Energiser A spoonful of honey in tea, porridge or a smoothie boosts us to get going and repair rapidly after exertion.

Virus fighter Shingles and herpes heal faster with manuka honey application.

Heart health “Honey is called ‘lekhana’, meaning it scrapes fat and cholesterol from tissues,” says Ayurvedic doctor Rama Prasad. “But as one tablespoon contains 63 calories, it should be taken in combination with a controlled diet.”

fresh royal jelly is rich in antioxidants, B vitamins and acetyl-choline. Studies suggest that royal jelly is effective in protecting the liver, reducing cholesterol, building bone and synthesising collagen for youthful skin. Propolis is a blend of sap and wax, and is used to seal hives. Mixed with manuka, it’s a powerful throat tonic with proven antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antiviral properties. Research shows propolis tincture reduces prostate cancer cells and banishes bacteria commonly causing food poisoning; it also alleviates allergies with its antihistamine effect. The only things to bee-ware of? Paediatricians advise against giving honey to babies under 12 months due to possible botulism infection. If diabetic or overweight, take honey in moderation to avoid blood sugar spikes. *

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