

The Sweetness of Honey

Honey is mentioned favourably in the writings of many religions; it was also viewed by many ancient cultures as “nature’s most precious gifts”...

So is it possible that something so sweet and delicious could be good for us?

Honey has a long history in healing. It has been used medicinally for at least 2,000 years. But it is only recently that its antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties have been fully documented.

Its antibiotic properties make it very effective in healing wounds and treating dry skin. It can also be used to treat skin burns as it has a healing and cooling effect at the same time. So it’s not a bad idea to keep honey in the medicine cabinet as well.

Honey has also been used to treat bronchitis, sore throats, anaemia, and sinusitis.

It is used to aid many digestive complaints such as ulcers and constipation. It has a light appetite-stimulating effect and facilitates assimilation and digestion of other foods.

Honey also has sedative, antiseptic and fever-reducing properties. It is often used to boost the immune system and to increase energy levels in the body.

What’s in it?

Raw honey contains as many as eighty different substances important in human nutrition.

It offers antioxidant vitamins A, C, and E, which help boost the immune system. It also contains vitamin D, vitamin K and beta carotene. And it includes all of the B-complex vitamins necessary for energy, headaches and memory.

In terms of minerals, it offers a long list, which includes magnesium, sulphur, phosphorus, iron, calcium, potassium, iodine, sodium, copper and manganese, all of which are very important to our health and wellbeing.

Raw honey also contains live enzymes, important to the internal actions of many systems of the body. It also contains proteins, carbohydrates, organic acids, hormones, and antimicrobial and antibiotic factors.

Honey vs. Sugar

In general, honey is twice as sweet as sugar with a variation in colour and taste depending on the origin. It is often used for sweetening other foods.

People who have diabetes or hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) should be careful when consuming honey and its by-products, because they affect blood sugar levels in the same way that refined sugars do.

When comparing honey with sugar, we find that honey has a natural, nutritious sweetness. Sugar is a non-nutrient; it offers only empty calories.

The New Zealand Manuka Honey, made from tea tree blossoms, is a highly potent sterilised honey, which is registered as a medicinal product in Australia; it has significant anti-fungal and anti-bacterial properties.

Commercially processed, clarified, strained honey loses from 33 to 50% of its original vitamin content. Raw, unprocessed honey is the type that is valued for its nutrient content and medicinal properties.

Sugar rushes into the body and causes a rapid surge in blood sugar, which puts strain on the pancreas and the body. Honey, on the other hand, is gently metabolised by the body; it provides energy that is easily and naturally used.

When replacing refined sugar with honey in cooking, the following rule should be followed: for each one cup of sugar called for in the recipe, substitute one cup of honey plus one-fourth to one-half teaspoon baking soda to neutralise the natural acidity of honey. Also, reduce the liquids in the recipe by one-fourth cup total because honey retains moisture for longer periods.

Taking Honey

When buying honey, look for ‘raw, unprocessed honey’ which is usually found in health food stores. It can be eaten separately, with other foods, added to recipes, or with warm drinks.

During a bout of a cold or flu, honey can be added to warm water and lemon or ginger for soothing sore throats and boosting immunity.

This unheated, unprocessed honey should never be given to an infant under one year of age because it could contain spores of the bacteria that cause botulism. This bacteria poses no problem to adults and older children; honey is safe for babies after age one.

Honey for the Skin

Many ladies in past generations have used honey-based lotions to nourish and condition their skin. Here is one idea:

Honey Mask:

Mix one tablespoon honey with one tablespoon fine white flour. Add a few drops of rose water, just enough to make a smooth paste that can be spread.

Thoroughly cleanse your face. Apply a thick coating of the honey mask over your entire face except around the eyes.

Keep it on your face for half an hour, then remove it with tepid water and a soft cloth. This mask should make your skin soft and velvety.

Alia Almoayed is a Nutritional Therapist running a busy nutrition consultancy in Bahrain, offering nutrition advice to the whole Middle East community. She writes health articles for various publications, holds lectures and seminars on health and nutrition, runs a weekly live radio health programme, and heads a number of weight loss projects. Alia is the author of *I Want Healthy Kids*, a book on how to raise healthy kids, and *The Dream Body Eating Plan*, a weight loss guide; she is also co-author of *101 Ways To Improve Your Health*. For more information, to book appointments, to get regular email health tips, or to request Alia’s special FREE Report entitled: *5 Secrets Your Doctor Won’t Tell You About Your Health*, visit www.AliaAlmoayed.com.