

Honey: Nature's Golden Healer

Pure, Raw Honey

It is often hailed as a natural, healthy sweetener - but in most cases, honey bought from supermarkets today is simply sugar syrup with no nutritional value at all. To reap the true benefits of what was dubbed 'the food of the gods' by the Ancient Greeks, you have to look for the pure raw honey.

Perfectly Clear Honey

Perfectly clear honey has usually undergone a process of ultra filtration and pasteurization, which involves heating and passing it through a fine mesh, to ensure it remains runny at any temperature. This strips away many of the unique chemicals and compounds that make it a nutritious and healing health food.

Cloudy/Crystallized Honey

Raw honey is often cloudy with a white residue of pollen sitting on the top of the jar. Raw honey might crystallize over time, but this is not a sign of rot - raw honey is a natural preservative. The jar just needs to be submerged in a bowl of hot water (not hotter than 120°F) for as little as 15 minutes to liquefy the contents.

Color Variations

Raw honeys vary in color because of the flowers from which the bees obtain their nectar, pollen and resin. The darker the color of the honey is, the higher the level of antioxidants.

Antioxidants

Raw honey is particularly high in polyphenols, an antioxidant that has been linked to a reduced risk of cancer, lowering blood cholesterol and combating heart disease.

White Ring of Pollen

The white ring of pollen that forms on top of honey (often referred to as honey-foam) contains B vitamins, Vitamins C, D and E as well as minerals and 31 other antioxidants.

Propolis

Unfiltered honey also contains a powerful substance called propolis, nicknamed bee penicillin, which is made from the resin that oozes from trees. Bees mix this resin with their saliva to create an antibacterial, antiviral and antifungal 'wallpaper' to ensure disease cannot enter their hives. Traces of this brown substance sometimes break off into the raw honey and make it naturally antibacterial.

Antiseptic

Bees also add the enzyme glucose oxidase to honey. When this comes into contact with moisture, it releases low levels of antiseptic hydrogen peroxide, which can kill bacteria but does not damage skin tissue.

Wound Treatment

The University of Waikato in New Zealand found that when raw honey was applied to MRSA infected antibiotic-resistant wounds, they became sterile and healed so quickly that patients could leave hospital weeks earlier. Scarring was minimized because peeling back a dressing glazed in honey - as opposed to a dry bandage - did not disturb the new tissue underneath. If you suffer a minor wound or burn, glaze a bandage with raw honey and cover. Change the glazed bandage every 24 hours and any cuts or signs of infection should disappear within a week (if not, see a doctor).

Manuka Honey

While manuka honey - a variety produced using only nectar and pollen from the manuka bush in New Zealand - gets the majority of press for being antibacterial, a good-quality raw honey may also be powerfully antibacterial and may kill E.coli and MRSA.

Digestion Aid

Unprocessed honey may aid digestion as it is prebiotic (stimulating the growth of healthy bacteria in the gut) and contains probiotics (the 'good' bacteria that help maintain a healthy digestive system). The University of Lund in Sweden found that raw honey contains bifidobacteria and Lactobacilli, which prevent stomach upsets. Eating raw honey daily has also been shown to be effective in treating and preventing gastric ulcers, perhaps because it fights the Helicobacter pylori bacteria that trigger the ulcer.

Superior Energy Source

Honey is a better energy source than white sugar. While one teaspoon of honey contains 22 calories and sugar just 15, the sweetness of honey is greater, so you need to use less to achieve the same sweetness. But what makes honey ideal as fuel for exercise is the combination of glucose (pure sugar) and fructose (pre-digested sugar from fruits), which provides instant and slower-burning energy, as opposed to the pure sucrose of sugar.

Lower Glycaemic Index

The Glycaemic Index (the rate at which sugar enters the bloodstream) of white sugar is 61, while raw honey is much lower at 35.

Reference:

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By Gloria Havenhand

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