

Miraculous Effects of Honey

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Honey is an ancient remedy for the treatment of infected wounds, which has recently been 'rediscovered' by the medical profession, particularly where conventional modern therapeutic agents are failing. There are now many published reports describing the effectiveness of honey in rapidly clearing infection from wounds, with no adverse effects to show the healing process. There is also some evidence to suggest that honey may actively promote healing. In laboratory studies, it has been shown to have an antimicrobial action against a broad spectrum of bacteria and fungi. However, further research is needed to optimize the effective use of this agent in clinical practice.

Introduction

Honey is a sweet and viscous fluid produced by honeybees from the nectar of flowers. "The definition of honey stipulates a pure product that does not allow for the addition of any other substance. This includes, but is not limited to, water or other sweeteners," according to the United States National Honey Board 2003 and other nations' food regulations. Honey is significantly sweeter than table sugar and has attractive chemical properties for baking. Honey has a distinctive flavor which leads some people to prefer it over sugar and other sweeteners.

Historical Background

Honey's healing benefits were known to ancient herbal physicians more than a thousand years ago, while scientists have just now begun to realize and research its amazing powers.

Indeed, Peter Molan, biochemist at the University of Waikato (New Zealand) has undertaken work for the past 17 years and has the experience that different types of honeys have varying degrees of properties (Molan, p. 1). Honey contains many minerals and vitamins beneficial to man. However, one of the most important properties seems to be its antibiotic action.

In addition to Molan's esteemed experience another story renders ironic proof for honey's bactericidal effects that of a 20-year-old wound in a British woman. Bacteria had been festering in an abscess in her armpit for years, she was resisting to all the antibiotics taken. Nothing seemed to help her and she could barely use her arm. In August 1999, she heard about honey's healing effects and convinced her doctors to put some in her dressing. At that point they were willing to try anything and were not very hopeful that anything would work. However, they were quite surprised when one month later the wound finally healed and the woman could use her arm again.

New Scientific Researches

Medical journals cite more than 600 cases in which honey was employed to treat wounds. By applying honey to wounds, you prevent infections. Honey contains antimicrobial agents, which prevent infections by killing the bacteria in and around the wounds. Using honey may help to heat it up before putting it on your wound (caution: test the heat before you place it on the wound). Many types of bacteria can't survive in honey, so wounds heal, swelling eases, and tissue can grow back.

Since then, honeys have been tested on the different species of bacteria responsible for wound infection (Molan, p. 2). The State Medical Society of Wisconsin announced, "It is only a matter of time before antibiotics lose their effectiveness because their overuse creates ever-stronger germs."

Honey is now known for its antibiotic, antifungal and antiviral capabilities. In fact, honey contains an enzyme that produces hydrogen peroxide, which is believed to be the main reason for its anti-microbial activity. If one wants to use it as a dressing, the best way is to use sterilized honey. However, the only way to sterilize honey without destroying its antibacterial agents is through gamma-irradiations. Honey is also used for sore throats, colds, heartburn, fever blisters, cuts, acne, skin disorders, ulcers, stomach inflammations and cataracts ... further more, its flavor excites the appetite (*The National Honey Board*).

Each drop of honey contains many minerals (e.g. potassium, sodium, phosphate, copper, iron, calcium, manganese), enzymes, trace elements, vitamins (A, B1, B2, B3, C, D, K), as well as beta-carotene. Honey also contains glucose, fructose and saccharine (70%) and is suitable preservative just by itself (*billybee.com*). Of course honey from a supermarket, which has been heated and filtered, may not be as therapeutic as one taken directly from the comb (Ifas, p. 4).

Researchers are not absolutely sure why Honey heals but they are learning new things about honey everyday. As mentioned in the beginning, honey contains a variety of sugars and minerals. Honey is also considered as an antioxidant. This means that it allows the blood to circulate better and provide more oxygen to areas of the body called vital organs such as the brain.

Germ Fighting Properties

Molan explains the mechanism of re-growth of skin tissues by moisturizing effects of honey as follows:

1. The nectar, being made of glucose and fructose, is attracted by water. When put on a wound, it absorbs water and body fluids, changing the medium thus resisting bacteria and inhibiting their growth too.
2. Raw honey contains glucose oxidase, an enzyme that produces a mild antiseptic activity when mixed with a bit of water. This enzyme is destroyed by heat and pasteurization. That is why it cannot be found in commercial honeys (Molan, p. 3).

Islam and Honey

Allah (ﷻ) says in the Qur'an that in paradise will be "rivers of pure honey."

At another place Allah says:

"And your Lord inspired the Bee: take your habitations in the hills and in the trees, and in that which they (i.e. men) erect; Then eat of all the fruits and move about in the ways of your Lord submissively. There comes forth from within their bodies a drink (i.e. honey) of many colours, in which there is healing for men. Therein is indeed a Sign for a people who reflect". (*Surah an-Nahl*, 68-69).

Prophet Mohammad (ﷺ) commented on its value 1400 years ago. Indeed, once a man came to the Prophet and said, "My brother has got loose motions." The Prophet said to him, "Let him drink honey" (*Bukhari*).

One Companion of the Prophet (ﷺ) reported, "In our holy battles, we used to get honey" (*Bukhari*). According to what we now know, this was a logical choice for travelers and soldiers, as honey is a supersaturated sugar and is easy to digest because of the monosaccharides.

In addition the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Honey is a remedy for every illness and the Qur'an is a remedy for all illness of the mind, therefore I recommend to you both remedies, the Qur'an and Honey" (*Bukhari*).

Important Benefits of Honey

Easily digested: Because sugar molecules in honey can convert into other sugars (e.g. fructose to glucose), honey is easily digested by the most sensitive stomachs, despite its high acid content. It helps kidneys and intestines to function better.

Good source of antioxidants: It plays a vital role in the prevention of cancer as well as heart disorders and disease.

Has a low calorie level: Another quality of honey is that, when it is compared with the same amount of sugar, it gives 40% less calories to the body. Although it gives great energy to the body, it does not add weight.

Rapidly diffuses through the blood: When accompanied by mild water, honey diffuses into the bloodstream in 7 minutes. Its free sugar molecules make the brain function better since the brain is the largest consumer of sugar, thus, reduces fatigue.

Supports blood formation: Honey provides an important part of the energy needed by the body for blood formation. In addition, it helps in cleansing the blood. It has some positive effects in regulating and facilitating blood circulation. It also functions as a protection against capillary problems and arteriosclerosis.

Does not accommodate bacteria: This bactericide (bacteria-killing) property of honey is named “the inhibition effect”. Experiments conducted on honey show that its bactericide properties increase twofold when diluted with water. It is very interesting to note that newly born bees in the colony are nourished with diluted honey by the bees responsible for their supervision – as if they know this feature of the honey.

Anti-tussive and expectorant properties: The anti-cough properties of honey are related to its capacity to dilute bronchial secretions and improve the function of the bronchial epithelium.

Anti-diarrhoeal properties: At a concentration of 40%, honey has a bactericidal effect on various gut bacteria known to cause diarrhoea and dysentery such as *Salmonella*, *Shigella enteropathogenic*, *E. coli* and *Vibrio cholera*. In one study, honey given with oral rehydration fluid was shown to reduce the duration of bacterial (infectious) diarrhoea in infants and children.

Royal jelly: Royal jelly is a substance produced by worker bees inside the beehive. Inside this nutritious substance are sugar, proteins, fats and many vitamins. It is used in problems caused by tissue deficiency or body weakness.

It is obvious that honey, which is produced in much higher amounts than the requirements of the bees, is made for the benefit of man. And it is also obvious that bees cannot perform such an unbelievable task “on their own.”

Certain Precautions

Although there is healing in honey for a variety of medical disorders, certain precautions should be taken for use:

1. Children under the age of one year should not be given honey due to the possibility of infant botulism. This type of food poisoning can be deadly, however, it only seems to affect infants under one year of age.
2. If you have any known allergies to specific plants, then you should make sure the honey you are using is not produced from that plant.
3. People with allergies to bee stings should be careful when using other bee-related products such as propolis or royal jelly.

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