



**Biotica  
Research  
Today**

**Vol 2:9 946  
2020 949**

# Uses of Bee Honey: Traditional and Modern

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 **Keywords**

Honey, Medicine, Traditional, Modern

## Article History

Received in 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020

Received in revised form 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

Accepted in final form 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020

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## How to cite this article?

Kaur *et al.*, 2020. Uses of Bee Honey: Traditional and Modern. *Biotica Research Today* 2(9): 946-949.

## Abstract

Honey has a very complex chemical composition that varies depending on the botanical source. It has been used both as food and medicine since ancient times. In addition to the important roles of natural honey in the traditional medicine, during the past few decades, honey plays an important role as an antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial agent and augments the adherence of skin grafts and wound healing process. The role of honey has been acknowledged in the scientific literature. According to the modern scientific literature, honey may be useful and has protective effects for the treatment of various diseases; honey could be considered as a natural therapeutic agent for various medicinal purposes. Sufficient evidence exists recommending the use of honey in the management of disease conditions. It has been used in innumerable foods and beverages as sweetening and flavoring agent. Since ancient times, honey has been known for nutritive and therapeutic values.

## Introduction

Honey is a sweet, viscous food substance, made by honey bees and some related insects. Bees produce honey from the sugary secretions of plants (floral nectar) or from secretions of other insects (such as honeydew), by regurgitation, enzymatic activity, and water evaporation. Bees store honey in wax structures called honeycombs. The variety of honey produced by honey bees is the best-known, due to its worldwide commercial production and human consumption. Honey gets its sweetness from the monosaccharine fructose and glucose, and has about the same relative sweetness as sucrose.

## Honey in Indian System of Ayurveda

Ayurveda is a compound word "Ayur" means 'life' or 'life principle', and the word "Veda", which refers to 'a system of knowledge'. Hence 'Ayurveda' roughly translates as the 'knowledge of life'. The ancient Vedic civilization considered honey one of nature's most remarkable gifts to mankind. Traditionally, according to the texts of Ayurveda, honey is a boon to those with weak digestion. It is also used in the treatment of irritating cough. Honey is regarded by Ayurvedic experts, as valuable in keeping the teeth and gums healthy. It has been used for centuries for the treatment of insomnia because it has hypnotic action. Additionally, traditional Ayurvedic experts recommend honey for skin disorders (such as wounds and burns), cardiac pain and palpitation, all imbalances of the lungs and anemia and for eye ailments.

## Honey in Ancient Egypt

**H**oney was the most popular Egyptian drug being mentioned 500 times in 900 remedies. Its prescription for a standard wound salve discovered in the Smith papyrus. Almost all Egyptian medicines contained honey together with wine and milk. The ancient Egyptians offered honey to their deities as a sacrifice. They also use honey for embalming the dead. Honey was utilized for its antibacterial properties that helped to heal infected wounds. Moreover, honey was used as a topical ointment.

## Honey in Ancient Greece

**O**enomel is an ancient Greek beverage consisting of honey and unfermented grape juice. It is sometimes used as a folk remedy for gout and certain nervous disorders. Hippocrates, the great Greek scientist, prescribed a simple diet, favoring honey given as oxymel (vinegar and honey) for pain, hydromel (water and honey) for thirst, and a mixture of honey, water and various medicinal substances for acute fevers. Also they utilized honey for baldness, contraception, wound healing, laxative action, cough and sore throat, eye diseases, topical antiseptic, prevention and treatment of scars.

## Honey in Islamic Medicine

**I**n Islamic medical system, it is a healthy drink. The holy Qur'an vividly illustrates the potential therapeutic value of honey: "And thy Lord taught the bees to build its cells in hills, on trees, and in (men's) habitations; Then to eat of all the produce (of the earth), and find with skill the spacious paths of its Lord: there issues from within their bodies a drink of varying colors, where in is healing for men: verily in this is a sign for those who give thought". Moreover, the Muslim prophet Mohammad (SA) recommended the use of honey for the treatment of diarrhea. Avicenna, the great Iranian scientist recommended honey as one of the best remedies in the treatment of tuberculosis.

Antibacterial activity of honey is one of the most important findings that were first recognized in 1892; by Van Ketel.

## Benefits of Honey

- **Prevent Cancer and Heart Disease:** Honey contains flavonoids, antioxidants which help reduce the risk of some cancers and heart disease.
- **Reduce Ulcers and other Gastrointestinal Disorders:** Recent research shows that honey treatment may help disorders such as ulcers and bacterial gastroenteritis.
- **Anti-bacterial and Anti-fungal:** "All honey is antibacterial, because the bees add an enzyme that makes hydrogen peroxide," said Peter Molan, Director of the Honey Research Unit at the University of Waikato in New Zealand.

- **Increase Athletic Performance:** Ancient Olympic athletes would eat honey and dried figs to enhance their performance. It is superior in maintaining glycogen levels and improving recovery time than other sweeteners.

- **Reduce Cough and Throat Irritation:** Honey helps to reduce coughs and throat irritation. In a study of 110 children, a single dose of buckwheat honey was just as effective as a single dose of dextrose methorphan in relieving nocturnal cough and allowing proper sleep.

- **Balance the 5 elements:** Honey is considered to affect all three of the body's primitive material imbalances positively. It is also said to be useful in improving eyesight, weight loss, curing impotence and premature ejaculation, urinary tract disorders, bronchial asthma, diarrhea, and nausea.

Honey is referred to as "Yogavahi" since it has a quality of penetrating the deepest tissues of the body. Honey is used with other herbal preparations; it enhances the medicinal qualities of those preparations and also helps them to reach the deeper tissues.

- **Blood Sugar Regulation:** It contains simple sugars; it is NOT the same as sugar or artificial sweeteners. Its exact combination of fructose and glucose actually helps the body regulate blood sugar levels.

- **Heal Wounds and Burns:** External application of honey is as effective as conventional treatment with silver sulfadiazine. It is speculated that the drying effect of the simple sugars and honey's anti-bacterial nature combine to create this effect.

## Benefits of Honey for Skin

### 1. Moisturizing Face Mask

**W**ith its moisturizing and soothing effects, raw honey can hydrate the skin, leaving it soft, radiant, and glowing," says Ildi Pekar, celebrity facials and owner of **Ildi Pekar Skin Care**. "The sugars in honey act as natural humectants and emollients that increase the water content and reduce dryness in the skin even after they have been washed off."

### 2. Gentle Exfoliate

**S**ince raw honey crystallizes over time, says Stein, the tiny granules act as a gentle exfoliate. They start to break down when come into contact with water and the heat of your skin making for a gentler scrub than that of the harsher store-bought stuff and used for daily face wash.

### 3. Scar Fader

**T**he antioxidant properties nourish damaged skin, helping the scar healing process, according to Stein. And for the added bonus of anti-inflammation, keep an eye out for honey infused with propolis it can help tone down the look of stretch marks and skin discoloration.

**4. Wound Healer**

**H**oney’s natural antiseptic properties prevent infections and protect wounds, say Dr. Engelmann, which reduces scarring and cut down on healing time.

**5. Acne Spot Treatment**

**H**oney is a great remedy for acne. It’s an anti-inflammatory, which reduce the redness and swelling of pimples, says Stein, and its antibacterial properties can help fight acne-causing bacteria especially if it’s infused with propolis. “Also, because honey keeps the skin well-hydrated and balanced, it control the production of oil,” adds Pekar.

**6. Cuticle Moisturizer**

**S**ince honey is natural humectants, it keeps the skin around cuticles happy and peel-free. Grab a bottle of honey that’s packing royal jelly, another bee product, Stein says, since it’s a collagen-builder. That added ingredient will bring new life to the nails and strengthen the skin around them.

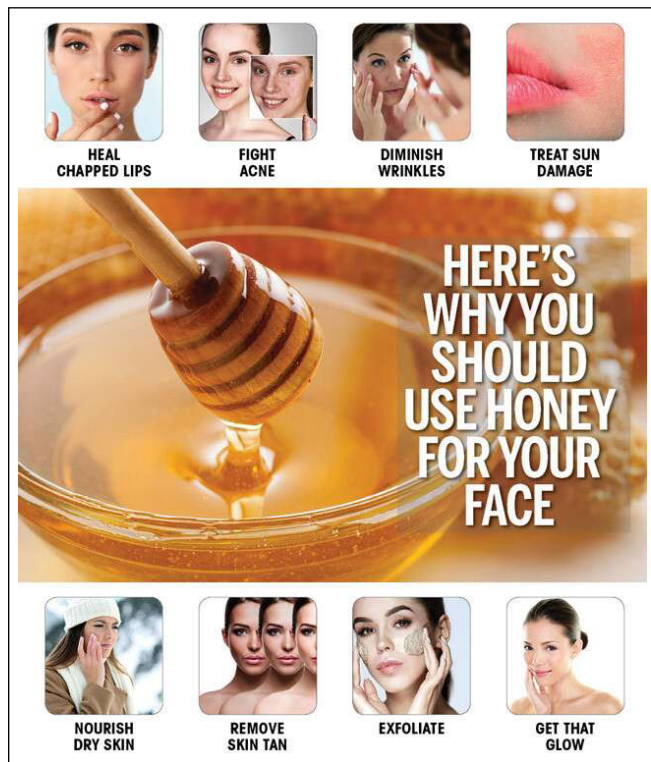


Figure 1: Honey for Skin

**7. Everyday Conditioner**

**"H**oney is a perfect conditioner because it retains and attracts moisture, keeping hair feel smooth and healthy," says Fischer, celebrity hair artist.

**8. Lip Balm**

**E**verything that makes honey a great skin moisturizer makes it great for chapped lips, too. “The hydrating benefits mixed with natural enzymes, antioxidants, and

minerals work well to moisturize lips,” Pekar says.

**9. Sleep Aid**

**W**hile consuming honey it causes a slow, steady spike of insulin, which converts to serotonin and melatonin, two chemicals that help to fall asleep. And, if someone to wake up in the middle of the night, a tablespoon of honey helps to stay asleep since [honey] helps to stock the glycogen in the liver; something in the brain needs to keep you asleep for a dreamy eight hours.

**10. Burn Relief**

**T**he anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and moisture-restoring properties of honey are super soothing on an irritated and *irritating* burn (even sunburn). Plus, its thickness acts as a barrier from any infections that might try to make their way into the burn, so no need to cover with gauze after applying the honey.

**Benefits of Honey for Hairs**

**H**oney is an emollient which implies it is a characteristic conditioner. This makes it an incredible hair conditioner that smoothen hairs. So, if looking at getting natural texture back, honey plays an important role.

- It is a natural antioxidant, so it tends to make scalp healthy and stimulate hair growth. It is also rich in vitamins and minerals, so using it for hair care routine can leave tresses looking shinier, feeling softer, and in an overall healthier condition.
- As honey is an emollient, it likewise enhances the strength of the hair follicles, which are in charge of hair development. Analysts say that appropriate utilization of nectar of treatment of hair can wake up the resting hair follicles which support the development of hair.
- We all know that honey is a humectants; it has a tendency to keep the loss of dampness from the scalp. In any case, honey has likewise high sugar content which holds dampness. This accordingly anticipates hair fall and reinforces the hair follicles.



Figure 2: Honey for Hair

• Honey also comprises of antibacterial and antiseptic qualities. This prevents scalp from infections and tends to

keep scalp clean and bacteria-free. This also keeps away from dandruff and itchiness on the scalp.

- If hairs are dry or increased pollution and direct exposure to the sun has made them lifeless, then use of honey can bring back that lost sheen and shine of hairs.
- Honey is a natural lightener so it serves as a natural method to add subtle highlights or slightly lift hairs color overall. For a more intense effect, combine honey with favorite conditioner, and add a squeeze of lemon juice. If looking for darken hairs, consider using molasses as a substitute.

There is absolutely no denying that benefits of Honey for health but it work effectively in beautifying the texture and quality of hair as well.

### Conclusion

The most well known effect of honey is antibacterial activity. Honey has also been reported to exhibit an inhibitory effect on yeast, fungi, leishmania and some viruses. Topical application of honey has been effectively used on mucocutaneous injuries such as genital lesions, superficial skin burns and post operation wounds. In addition,

honey has been used in some gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, inflammatory and neoplastic states. The antioxidant capacity of honey which plays an important role in its useful effects, related to a wide range of compounds including phenolics, peptides, organic acids, enzymes, and Maillard reaction products.

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