



Herbs For Healing Newsletter



Natural remedy of the month: honey

For thousands of years honey has been loved for its sweetness. Early rock paintings in Africa and eastern Spain from around 7000 B.C. show people gathering honey from trees or rock crevices.

Today we still find feral bee colonies in south-facing roof spaces of old village churches and other undisturbed places.

We also find many different kinds of honey from many different countries in the shops.

Female worker bees collect flower nectar, transform this nectar by a process of regurgitation into honey, store it in wax cells in the honeycomb and close these cells with wax cappings.

The entire colony uses this honey for its survival. They feed themselves and their young larvae, and honey is needed in large quantities to survive the winter months when nature is dormant.

Up until two centuries ago beekeepers only harvested the true surplus, which was still in the hive in the spring following the year after the bees collected it.

Modern apiculture however removes the honeycomb to extract honey and beeswax, and replaces the honey with sugar solution or a corn-syrup to sustain them. This is a cheap and convenient substitute akin to fast food for humans with poor nutritional value.

A food and a medicine

Honey, like many plants and herbs, is food and medicine.

Raw honey is extracted from the honey comb with a minimum of processing, it is not sterilised and not heated to high temperatures which means that many vitamins and enzymes are undamaged.

Raw honey from bees who feed on honey, not on sugar solution, has the best nutritional and medicinal value.



Honey hunter rock painting from Spain. Image source: goreybeekeepers.com



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How can honey be used as a medicine?

Honey has been used for treating sore throats, coughs and colds, skin problems and stomach ulcers, and for dressing stubborn wounds.

Recent research is continually confirming the healing properties of honey.

It acts as a broad-spectrum antibiotic, inhibiting the growth of many pathogenic bacteria and actively destroying them due to its osmotic effect.

Similar to propolis, another valuable bee product, honey is effective in clearing up and healing wounds that were infected with MRSA, a bug resistant to penicillin and other antibiotics.



Darker honeys seem to be more potent and have stronger anti-microbial properties than lighter honeys. Manuka honey is very dark and highly effective against Staphylococcus aureus bacteria.

Research is also being done with this honey to successfully treat helicobacter pylori which can cause stomach ulcers.

It is worth keeping a jar of good quality local honey in the cupboard because it is a great energy booster, it is a precious healthy food and natural remedy for many ailments.

Bees perform a vital role: we must protect them

The state of affairs for honey bees and other pollinating insects is a difficult one. Without them there will be little food for humans. It is time to treat them with respect and rethink mankind's relationship to nature.

Honey as a wound healer

Honey as a wound healer reduces infection and pain. It speeds up the wound healing process and prevents scarring and aids tissue regeneration.

It promotes the growth of healthy new skin, it is the world's best-known remedy for burns and ulcers.

Superior to sugar: honey is easy to digest

As a food raw honey is nutritionally superior to white, brown or raw sugars. It contains many bioactive compounds and shows a greater antioxidant activity due to its plant sources collected as nectar. The simple sugars in honey are easy to digest.



Warning: Needless to say however that one should not consume excessive amounts of honey. Children under the age of 12 months should not be given raw honey because their digestive system is not fully developed to deal with rare but possible bacterial contamination.

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