

# The Wellness Express



Jump on the train to good health

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## Honey – A Sweet Medicine?

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“A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down” as the old song lyric goes. But, perhaps they should change it from “sugar” to “honey,” as this sweet natural substance not only helps the medicine go down, it can actually *be* the medicine! Now that the annual flu season is underway, you may want to consider honey the next time you get that itch in the back of your throat.

### History of Honey

Honey is produced by honey bees and is derived from the nectar of flowers. It is a mixture of sugar and several other substances. The taste and texture of honey can vary, both due to the type of flowers that the bees access as well as how the honey is processed.

Honey has a long relationship with humans, stretching as far back as our cave dwelling ancestors. An ancient cave painting in Spain shows women collecting honey from beehives. Although first gathered as a food source, honey was also used as an ingredient in religious rituals.

The ancient Egyptians held honey in high regard, as it was offered to their goddess of fertility and used prominently in baked goods of that era. The Egyptians even used honey in the embalming process of their dead. In the Western hemisphere, the Mayans collected honey and believed it to be sacred.

The sweet substance is mentioned in the literature of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism.

### Honey in Folk Medicine

In traditional Chinese medicine, honey is recommended for invigorating the health of the lungs, spleen and stomach. Herbal doctors in China would also give patients honey to treat dehydration, pain, fatigue and boost Chi energy. Other folk and herbal medicine traditions used honey for coughs, bronchitis and bolstering immunity. Honey was also added to other medicinal ingredients to improve taste and make it more palatable to patients.



### Exercise of the Week

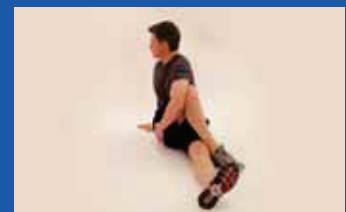
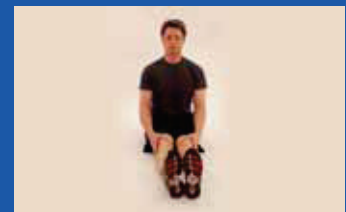
Rotation

**Difficulty:** Easy to moderate

*(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)*

**Start:** Sitting, with legs out in front of you.

**Exercise:** Cross one leg over other, as shown in image #2. Place elbow of opposite arm on outside part of knee to lock leg in that position, and then rotate upper body as far as you can (without pain) past bent knee (see image #3). Place other hand on floor behind you to help support upper torso. Hold for 15-30 seconds. Switch sides, and repeat 2X per side.



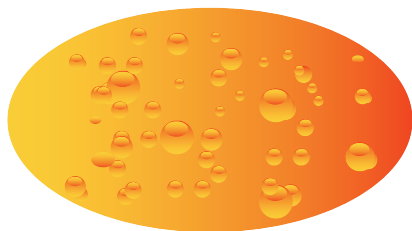
## Modern Research

Most scientific studies on honey have looked at its effects on coughs, bacterial infections, and damaged skin.

As mentioned, honey has been used for centuries as a throat soothing elixir, natural cough suppressant, and decongestant. The *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* published a study of 100 children (between the ages of 2 and 18) with upper respiratory infections who were given either buckwheat honey, dextromethorphan or nothing at all. According to their parents, the kids who received the honey had the best relief from symptoms compared to the other methods. The study authors wrote in their conclusion, "Honey may be a preferable treatment for the cough and sleep difficulty associated with childhood upper respiratory tract infection."<sup>1</sup>

The University of Ottawa conducted a study using manuka honey, which is sourced from New Zealand's manuka bush. Using this honey, scientists were able to destroy bacteria involved in the development of chronic sinusitis, which inflames the nasal cavity and may impact sufferers for months.<sup>2</sup>

The immune system of a honey bee contains a protein called defensin-1, which gets passed into the honey when bees create it from flower nectar. Scientists believe this is the major antibacterial property within honey. The success of honey as an antibacterial may help develop new types of antibiotics that can overcome current drug-resistant bacteria.



## Healing Wounds and Burns

Long before modern medicine began exploring honey for its therapeutic benefits, people used honey to treat wounds and burns. The antibacterial ingredients in honey may help stop infection and nourish new tissue growth. Its anti-inflammatory properties may also reduce swelling and scarring.

In a review of 19 medical studies on honey, evidence revealed honey can speed the healing of moderate burns by up to four days sooner.<sup>3</sup>

However, this doesn't mean you grab honey from your kitchen and slather a wound or burn with it. The type used in research is sterile, medical-grade honey. Also, honey does not appear to benefit some wounds, such as leg ulcers.

## Honey Hazard

Honey should NOT be given to infants under 2 years of age, as it can contain botulism spores. The immature digestive system of an infant can't kill these spores and could lead to poisoning and death, although this is rare. Consult a qualified health care professional on using honey for medicinal purposes.



Don't forget that another important way to help prepare your body for the cold and flu season is regular chiropractic adjustments. Your nervous system plays an important role in the function of your immune system. By keeping your nervous system free of subluxations, your body can harness its maximum innate power to fight bacteria and viruses.

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## Quote to Inspire

"Life is a series of spontaneous changes. Do not resist them – that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like."

- Lao Tzu

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1. Effect of Honey, Dextromethorphan, and No Treatment on Nocturnal Cough and Sleep Quality for Coughing Children and Their Parents – *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2007;161(12):1140-1146.
2. An investigation into the effects of manuka honey on protein expression in methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* using 2D electrophoresis – *Society of General Microbiology, Autumn*
3. Honey as a topical treatment for wounds (Review) - *The Cochrane Collaboration, 2009.*



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