

# The benefits of honey

## 10 Surprising Health Benefits of Honey

Since ancient times, honey has been used as both a food and a medicine.

It's very high in beneficial plant compounds and offers several health benefits. Honey is particularly healthy when used instead of refined sugar, which is 100% empty calories. Here are the top 10 health benefits of honey.

### 1. Honey Contains Some Nutrients

Honey is a sweet, thick liquid made by honeybees.

The bees collect sugar — mainly the sugar-rich nectar of flowers — from their environment (1).

Once inside the beehive, they repeatedly consume, digest and regurgitate the nectar.

The end product is honey, a liquid that serves as stored food for bees. The smell, color and taste depend on the types of flowers visited.

Nutritionally, 1 tablespoon of honey (21 grams) contains 64 calories and 17 grams of sugar, including fructose, glucose, maltose and sucrose.

It contains virtually no fiber, fat or protein (2).

It also contains trace amounts — under 1% of the RDI — of several vitamins and minerals, but you would have to eat many pounds to fulfill your daily requirements.

Where honey shines is in its content of bioactive plant compounds and antioxidants. Darker types tend to be even higher in these compounds than lighter types (3Trusted Source, 4).

### SUMMARY

Honey is thick, sweet liquid made by honeybees. It is low in vitamins and minerals but may be high in some plant compounds.

### 2. High-Quality Honey Is Rich in Antioxidants

High-quality honey contains many important antioxidants. These include organic acids and phenolic compounds like flavonoids (5Trusted Source).

Scientists believe that the combination of these compounds gives honey its antioxidant power (5Trusted Source).

Interestingly, two studies have shown that buckwheat honey increases the antioxidant value of your blood (6Trusted Source, 7Trusted Source).

Antioxidants have been linked to reduced risk of heart attacks, strokes and some types of cancer. They may also promote eye health (8Trusted Source).

### SUMMARY

Honey contains a number of antioxidants, including phenolic compounds like flavonoids.

### 3. Honey Is "Less Bad" Than Sugar for Diabetics

The evidence on honey and diabetes is mixed.

On one hand, it can reduce several risk factors for heart disease common in people with type 2 diabetes.

raising “good” HDL cholesterol (9Trusted Source, 10Trusted Source, 11Trusted Source, 17Trusted Source).

For example, one study in 55 patients compared honey to table sugar and found that honey caused a 5.8% reduction in LDL and a 3.3% increase in HDL cholesterol. It also led to modest weight loss of 1.3% (18Trusted Source).

### SUMMARY

Honey seems to have a positive effect on cholesterol levels. It leads to modest reductions in total and “bad” LDL cholesterol while raising “good” HDL cholesterol.

### 6. Honey Can Lower Triglycerides

Elevated blood triglycerides are another risk factor for heart disease.

They are also associated with insulin resistance, a major driver of type 2 diabetes.

Triglyceride levels tend to increase on a diet high in sugar and refined carbs.

Interestingly, multiple studies have linked regular honey consumption with lower triglyceride levels, especially when it is used to replace sugar (9Trusted Source, 10Trusted Source, 11Trusted Source, 17Trusted Source).

For example, one study comparing honey and sugar found 11–19% lower triglyceride levels in the honey group (18Trusted Source).

### SUMMARY

Elevated triglycerides are a risk factor for heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Several studies show that honey can lower triglyceride levels, especially when used as a sugar substitute.

### 7. The Antioxidants in It Are Linked to Other Beneficial Effects on Heart Health

Again, honey is a rich source of phenols and other antioxidant compounds. Many of these have been linked to a reduced risk of heart disease (8Trusted Source).

They may help the arteries in your heart dilate, increasing blood flow to your heart. They may also help prevent blood clot formation, which can lead to heart attacks and strokes (8Trusted Source).

Furthermore, one study in rats showed that honey protected the heart from oxidative stress (19Trusted Source).

All told, there is no long-term human study available on honey and heart health. Take these results with a grain of salt.

### SUMMARY

The antioxidants in honey have been linked to beneficial effects on heart health, including increased blood flow to your heart and a reduced risk of blood clot formation.

### 8. Honey Promotes Burn and Wound Healing

Topical honey treatment has been used to heal wounds and burns since ancient Egypt and is still common today.

A review of 26 studies on honey and wound care found honey most effective at healing partial-thickness burns and

For example, it may lower “bad” LDL cholesterol, triglycerides and inflammation while raising “good” HDL cholesterol (9Trusted Source, 10Trusted Source, 11Trusted Source).

However, some studies have found that it can also increase blood sugar levels — just not as much as refined sugar (10Trusted Source).

While honey may be slightly better than refined sugar for people with diabetes, it should still be consumed with caution.

In fact, people with diabetes may do best by minimizing all high-carb foods (12Trusted Source).

Keep in mind, too, that certain types of honey may be adulterated with plain syrup. Although honey adulteration is illegal in most countries, it remains a widespread problem (13Trusted Source).

#### SUMMARY

Some studies show that honey improves heart disease risk factors in people with diabetes. However, it also raises blood sugar levels — so it cannot be considered healthy for people with diabetes.

#### 4. The Antioxidants in It Can Help Lower Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is an important risk factor for heart disease, and honey may help lower it.

This is because it contains antioxidant compounds that have been linked to lower blood pressure (14Trusted Source).

Studies in both rats and humans have shown modest reductions in blood pressure from consuming honey (15Trusted Source, 16Trusted Source).

#### SUMMARY

Eating honey may lead to modest reductions in blood pressure, an important risk factor for heart disease.

#### 5. Honey Also Helps Improve Cholesterol

High LDL cholesterol levels is a strong risk factor for heart disease.

This type of cholesterol plays a major role in atherosclerosis, the fatty buildup in your arteries that can lead to heart attacks and strokes.

Interestingly, several studies show that honey may improve your cholesterol levels.

It reduces total and “bad” LDL cholesterol while significantly

wounds that have become infected after surgery (20Trusted Source).

Honey is also an effective treatment for diabetic foot ulcers, which are serious complications that can lead to amputation (21Trusted Source, 22Trusted Source).

One study reported a 43.3% success rate with honey as a wound treatment. In another study, topical honey healed a whopping 97% of patients’ diabetic ulcers (22Trusted Source, 23Trusted Source).

Researchers believe that honey’s healing powers come from its antibacterial and anti-inflammatory effects as well as its ability to nourish surrounding tissue (24Trusted Source).

What's more, it can help treat other skin conditions, including psoriasis and herpes lesions (25Trusted Source, 27Trusted Source).

Manuka honey is considered especially effective for treating burn wounds (28Trusted Source).

#### SUMMARY

When applied to the skin, honey can be part of an effective treatment plan for burns, wounds and many other skin conditions. It is particularly effective for diabetic foot ulcers.

#### 9. Honey Can Help Suppress Coughs in Children

Coughing is a common problem for children with upper respiratory infections.

These infections can affect sleep and quality of life for both children and parents.

However, mainstream medications for cough are not always effective and can have side effects. Interestingly, honey may be a better choice, and evidence indicates it is very effective (28Trusted Source, 29Trusted Source).

One study found that honey worked better than two common cough medications (30Trusted Source).

Another study found that it reduced cough symptoms and improved sleep more than cough medication (29Trusted Source).

Nevertheless, honey should never be given to children under one year of age due to the risk for botulism (31Trusted Source).

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/10-benefits-of-honey#section6>