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BEYOND SWEETNESS: THE NUTRITIONAL AND MEDICINAL TREASURE OF HONEY

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By Azlini Ismail |



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herbal remedy, honey, medicinal property, traditional medicine

Honey is a natural product formed from the nectar of flowers by honeybees and has been a part of many cultural and culinary traditions since the beginning of time. Honey holds a special place in prophetic medicine as it carries healing properties as mentioned in the Qur'an in Surah An-Nahl, verse 69:

"And your Lord inspired the bee, 'Take for yourself among the mountains, houses, and among the trees and [in] that which they construct. Then eat from all the fruits and follow the ways of your Lord laid down [for you].' There emerges from their bellies a drink, varying in colors, in which there is healing for people. Indeed, in that is a sign for a people who give thought."

Beyond its delicious taste, honey is the liquid gold of nature. With the manifold compositions comprising of carbohydrates, proteins, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, enzymes, organic acids, and many other metabolites such as flavonoids, polyphenols, alkaloids, glycosides, cardiac glycosides, anthraquinone, and volatile compounds, honey does not only sate our sweet teeth but also provide a wealth of health benefits.

One of the many wonderful health benefits of honey is its capability to act as a natural energy booster. It is a healthier option than refined sugar or artificial sweeteners, even if honey does contain natural sugars. It becomes a great choice for people who need an energy boost because it contains quick-acting sugars like glucose and fructose. In addition to its natural sugars, it also contains vitamins and minerals, which support a more long-lasting energy release.

Another remarkable quality of honey is its ability to act as a natural defense against harmful bacteria with its strong antimicrobial properties and by strengthening our immune system. Honey has strong antibacterial properties that can effectively fight against infections and accelerate the wound-healing process. The antioxidant in honey helps reduce oxidative stress, thus supporting the immune system and lowering the risk of chronic diseases.

Warm water or herbal tea with a spoonful of honey is one of the traditional ways of relieving sore throat and cough. The structure of honey, which is thick and viscous, helps in coating the throat which soothes the irritation and lessens the coughing. Its antimicrobial qualities also aid in preventing bacterial growth in the respiratory tract. When applied topically, honey's antibacterial and anti-inflammatory qualities promote tissue regeneration,

prevent infections, and foster a healing environment for burns and wounds. Consuming honey in moderation can help maintain a healthy digestive system, ease indigestion symptoms, and encourage the development of good gut bacteria as honey has invertase and amylase, two enzymes that help break down and digest carbohydrates.

Honey, being the liquid gold of nature, goes far beyond its delightful taste. Its unique blend of nutrients and the variety of health benefits that it carries due to its varied pharmacological properties make it a valuable addition to our diet. Although honey has many health advantages, it is still advisable to use honey with caution in some instances. For example, giving honey to a child who is under one may cause infant botulism, a rare but serious illness, which can be caused by bacteria found in raw honey. Additionally, people with diabetes should also carefully monitor their honey intake because honey also contains sugar. All in all, honey is a treasure that goes beyond sweetness, but it must be consumed wisely and sensibly.



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