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## Bee Foods

By Jack Challem

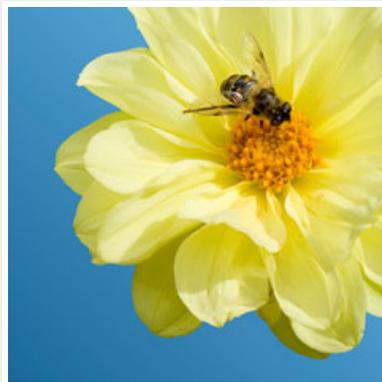
Propolis, royal jelly, and honey offer a swarm of health benefits

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Products derived from beehives may be the original superfoods. Although these folk remedies date back thousands of years, scientific research has documented their benefits and provided an explanation of how they work. They can reduce inflammation, protect against free radicals, and help fight infections.

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR:** The three bee foods that have garnered the most research are propolis, royal jelly, and honey. You'll also find bee pollen granules in health food stores.

**HOW BEE FOODS WORK:** Many of the benefits of bee foods can be attributed to a potent family of plant antioxidants called polyphenolic flavonoids. Bees obtain the building blocks for propolis, royal jelly, and honey from plants, so all of these bee foods are rich in natural antioxidants.



### HEALTH BENEFITS:

**PROPOLIS.** Bees make propolis from the resinous sap of trees and use it much the same way people use weather stripping at home—to seal their hives against the elements. Some 300 different compounds have been identified in propolis, including resveratrol.

Bees are particularly susceptible to microbial infections, so it shouldn't be surprising that propolis possesses antiviral, antibacterial, and antifungal properties. Studies have found that propolis can inhibit the growth of viruses, including herpes simplex type 1 and 2.

Propolis seems to work against disease-causing bacteria in at least two ways: preventing reproduction and breaking down bacterial membranes. Propolis can fight *Staphylococcus aureus*, a bacterium that causes dangerous post-surgical infections, blood poisoning, and a type of pneumonia. A European study found that propolis extracts had a significant effect when used with antibiotics to fight *S. aureus*.

Interestingly, propolis inhibits the activity of several streptococcal bacteria species that cause dental caries. Japanese researchers reported that propolis-fed laboratory rats had far fewer caries than those given a regular diet. Propolis protected specifically against *Streptococcus mutans* and several other strep species.

**ROYAL JELLY.** Royal jelly is the exclusive food of queen bees, which are larger and live longer than other bees. An analysis of human studies found that royal jelly can reduce high levels of total cholesterol, as well as normalize levels of the high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) forms of cholesterol. Based on the research, Jozef Vittek, MD, of the New York Medical College in Valhalla, New York, suggested that 50—100 mg daily of royal jelly should reduce total cholesterol levels by about 14 percent.

**HONEY.** Honey is probably best known as a natural sweetener, but it has also been used since ancient times for medicinal purposes. At least 181 different compounds have been identified in

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honey, and four of them—naringenin, pinocembrin, p-hydroxybenzoic acid, and chrysin—have well documented antioxidant and germ-fighting properties.

Throughout much of the Third World, doctors use honey-soaked gauze to treat burns, wounds, and skin infections. Doctors at the medical college in Maharashtra, India, used honey-soaked gauze to treat 40 burn patients. Those treated with honey healed in about half the time and with half the scar tissue as those treated by other means.

**GLEANINGS:** The biological activity of honey varies due to the location of hives, local plant varieties, and processing methods. Try to use honey that has undergone minimal processing.

**HEADS UP:** On the advice of a friend, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) started taking bee pollen granules for his allergies, which then disappeared. Harkin has since been an advocate of dietary supplements.

**WHAT SHOULD YOU TAKE:** Always follow the label directions for any supplement you choose. For the vast majority of people, bee foods are extraordinarily safe. However, if you have pollen allergies or are at risk of an anaphylactic reaction, please consult a physician with knowledge of natural remedies before taking any bee products. Never give honey to infants less than one year of age.

## One Hive At a Time

When Henry Miller was 11 years old, he happened to sit next to a beekeeper on an airplane. He learned about colony collapse disorder, which destroys bees and beehives. The conversation motivated Henry to do something about it, and he asked his parents for a beehive.

That first hive turned into more, and eventually he formed Henry's Stingers. The company, located near Bellingham, Wash., sells regular honey and several spicy versions containing chipotle, cinnamon, cayenne, and ginger. Dedicated to saving bees, Henry, now 14, donates a percentage of his profits to The Foundation for the Preservation of Honey Bees. For more information, visit [henryssweetmiraclehoney.com](http://henryssweetmiraclehoney.com).

## Go Shopping!



MANUKAGUARD NUTRALIZE features apple cider vinegar and Manuka honey, a proprietary form of medical-grade honey from New Zealand. Designed to bring stomach acid into balance naturally and help ease heartburn.

NOW FOODS ROYAL JELLY has 30,000 mg of royal jelly in a base of raw, unprocessed honey. This nutrient-rich superfood can be added to almost anything—from smoothies to cereal to toast. Use 1 tsp. 1—2 times daily.

NATURANECTAR BEE PROPOLIS TRIO is a new product that combines high-antioxidant bee foods, including Brazilian Ultra-Green Propolis and Brazilian Red Propolis, for optimal health, energy, and enhanced immunity.

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