

Gifts from the Bee

Honey
Propolis
Pollen

Bee venom
Royal jelly

Apitherapy

Apitherapy is the term for the use of products from honeybees for therapeutic and pharmacological purposes. This can include honey, pollen, propolis, royal jelly and bee venom. Popular in Asia and Eastern Europe, the practice is also gaining a following in the West, where natural products are increasingly favored. There is a wealth of anecdotal experience to support apitherapy claims, and there is even a new journal coming out of England that is dedicated to the therapeutic properties of bee products.

We will take a short look at these bee products here since it is from herbs and wildflowers that bees make their nectar.

Honey – Nectar of the Gods

Honey has been valued as a sweetener since ancient times. In the Bible (Proverbs 24:13), Solomon exhorts: “My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste.”

Today honey is considered a highly nutritious food. It is eaten in its natural state and used in a wide range of cooking as well as some cosmetic applications.

Because of honey's unique characteristics it is a very stable food that is able to last for years without refrigeration.



Medicinal uses:

Antibacterial in treating wounds & cleaning them of pus and dead tissue.
Cold & cough remedy when drunk in lemon tea, apple cider vinegar or whisky.

Pollen – Nature’s Complete Food

Pollen is produced in the anthers of flowering plants. This fine, powdery substance is made up of microscopic grains, each containing a male gamete capable of fertilizing the female ovule or seed. Pollen is transported to the female ovule by bees visiting flowers of the same species, and also by wind, other insects & animals.

Together with honey, pollen is the main food source for developing bee larvae and is also eaten by adult bees. The composition of pollen varies not only between flower species but also season to season. The major component is protein, making up about 27% and fat around 5%. Pollen contains substantial quantities of many minerals including calcium, magnesium and potassium.

With raw, unfiltered honey, one can get some pollen when using this type of honey. Most store bought honey is filtered and the filtering process removes most of the pollen grains. Pollen is a good food supplement providing protein and minerals.



Safety considerations:

There have been reports of people suffering adverse reactions (generally stomach or gastro-intestinal upset) after eating pollen. It is therefore recommended to only eat in small quantities

Medicinal uses:

Food supplement

Helpful in treatment of inflammation of the prostate gland (perhaps because of the high level of zinc in pollen).

Protects against harmful effects of radiation during xray.

Eating local honey with pollen (unfiltered) can help alleviate symptoms of hayfever.

Propolis – Nature’s Miracle Cure

Propolis is a stick residue that worker bees collect from conifers and other types of trees. They use it as a thin lining on the inside walls of the hive to strengthen their combs. Propolis’s antibacterial and antifungal properties have been known for thousands of years. Egyptian priests used it, Hippocrates prescribed it for treatment in sores and ulcers, both internally and externally. Celsus, a Roman medical writer described its uses in poultices.

Today it is used mainly used in Europe and North American as a natural food supplement or in herbal medicines. It is combined with pollen, royal jelly or other products in a tablet form or tinctured and used topically for cuts and skin rashes. It has also been used as an additive in cosmetic products from soaps to lotions to toothpaste and many more.

Royal jelly – A rare blend

Royal jelly is secreted by glands in the nurse bees between the ages of 5-15 days. Royal jelly is a special bee food for bees destined to be Queen Bees. Royal jelly is antibacterial and has played a central role in Chinese medicine for a long time. It is used in a wide range of conditions including anxiety, asthma, arterio-sclerosis, depression, fatigue, hair loss, impotence, stomach ulcers, skin conditions and high blood pressure. It is also used as an ingredient in skin moisturizers and creams. It is also sold as a natural food supplement.

Bee venom – Natural pain killer

Bee venom has been used in the treatment of arthritis for years. Medical writings going back to Hippocrates and Pliny the Elder refer to this treatment. Bee stings are also thought to ease the symptoms of MS, tendonitis and fibromyalgia.

Beeswax – Nature’s sealant

Beeswax is secreted by honeybees and used to build the comb for storage of honey and pollen. Beeswax has many uses in today’s world, the most widely known being the wonderful and sweet smelling beeswax candles.