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A Honey of a Sinusitis Treatment

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WEDNESDAY, Sept. 24 (HealthDay News) -- Honey may help bring sweet relief to chronic sinusitis sufferers, new Canadian research suggests.

Scientists say natural germ fighters in honey attack the bacteria that cause the discomforting disorder.

"Honey has been used in traditional medicine as a natural anti-microbial dressing for infected wounds for hundreds of years," noted study co-author Dr. Joseph G. Marsan, from the University of Ottawa.

The objectives of the study were to evaluate the activity of honey on so-called "biofilms," which are responsible for numerous chronic infections, Marsan explained.

"Certain bacteria, mainly *Staph aureus* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, have found a method of shielding themselves from the activity of anti-microbials by living in substances called biofilms, which cannot be penetrated by even the most powerful anti-microbials," he said.

The report was to be presented Tuesday at the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Foundation's annual meeting in Chicago.

In the laboratory, Marsan's team applied honey to biofilms made up of the bacteria that cause sinusitis.

They found that honey was more effective in killing these bacteria than antibiotics commonly used against them.

"Our study has shown that certain honeys, namely the Manuka honey from New Zealand and the Sidr honey from Yemen, have a powerful killing action on these bacterial biofilms that is far superior to the most powerful anti-microbials used in medicine today," Marsan said.

This study has shown that certain honeys may play some role in the management of these chronic infections that are extremely difficult to treat, Marsan said. "This study was carried out in-vitro in the lab and we must now find how to apply this activity in-vivo on lab animals and subsequently on patients," he added.

The Canadian findings echo research published last year in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, by a team at Penn State College of Medicine. That group found that honey worked better than commercial cough medicines containing dextromethorphan (DM) in easing children's cough.

But Dr. Ian Paul, director of Pediatric Clinical Research at Penn State and the leader of the cough study, isn't sure how the sinusitis findings would be applied clinically.

"Bacteria do not grow very well in honey," Paul noted. "There is data that honey works well for wounds, in smothering the bacteria that that grow in wounds. So it's not altogether surprising that honey would be effective in killing these bacteria."

However, whether honey could be used clinically to treat sinusitis isn't apparent, Paul said.

"I wonder how they are going to propose using honey, clinically, in sinusitis," Paul said. "I'm wondering how they are proposing it would be curative or helpful in that setting?"

Results of another study, slated to be presented at the meeting Tuesday, show that many patients with sinusitis suffer from aches and pains that are equal to those experienced by people with arthritis or depression.

Researchers found that endoscopic sinus surgery to relieve the blockage in the sinuses, also significantly reduced people's pain.

"This study highlights an important point: Chronic sinusitis should not be considered as a minor localized disease condition rather, as this study emphasizes, sinusitis can cause serious clinical levels of discomfort in many patients," study co-author Dr. Neil Bhattacharyya, an otolaryngologist and sinus surgeon at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, said in a statement.

More information

For more information on sinusitis, visit the [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#).

SOURCES: Joseph G. Marsan, M.D., University of Ottawa, Canada; Ian Paul, M.D., M.Sc., director, Pediatric Clinical Research, Penn State College of Medicine, Hershey; Sept. 23, 2008, presentation, American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Foundation Annual Meeting, Chicago

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