



FACT SHEET

HONEY

- Honey is the golden liquid made by bees from the nectar of flowers. Honey sold in supermarkets is usually collected from a number of beehives, heated to destroy any yeasts, blended, filtered and then packaged.
- Honey is a mix of about 16% water and 82% sugars (fructose, glucose and sucrose). It contains small amounts of minerals and acids but negligible protein, fat and vitamins.
- One tablespoon of honey (28g) contains approximately 369 kilojoules (87 calories) while one tablespoon of sugar (17g) contains 272 kilojoules/65 calories. The kilojoule content per tablespoon is higher for honey than for sugar because it weighs more. On a weight for weight basis, honey contains less kilojoules than sugar because of its higher water content. Honey has no nutritional advantage over sugar.
- Honey, like sugar, can cause tooth decay.
- **Honey must never be given to infants under 1 year of age** as it can be a source of Clostridium Botulinum spores. These spores are extremely heat resistant and are not destroyed when honey is processed. If an infant consumes a few spores these can multiply in the gut and produce a toxin which is then absorbed into the body. Botulism in babies can cause constipation, lethargy, poor feeding, paralysis and death from respiratory failure. While this condition is rare, it is serious and life threatening.
- Honey is not permitted as an ingredient in infant foods unless it has been specially treated to inactivate Clostridium Botulinum spores (Standard 2.9.2)
- Honey may contain naturally occurring toxins where bees have collected nectar from poisonous plants eg some plants of the Rhododendron family. This is rare however.
- Honey has been used for thousands of years as a treatment for a range of ailments such as the common cold. Recently honey has been recognised for its wound healing properties by the scientific community. Its healing/antibacterial effect is due to its high sugar, low water content, its acidity and the presence of hydrogen peroxide. Honeys used for wound healing are derived from a selected species of plant. Commercial honeys are not recommended on wounds. Medihoney® is an antibacterial honey product used for the topical treatment of wounds and sores, and approved by the Australian Therapeutic Good Administration.
- Royal Jelly is a milky secretion from the salivary glands of the honey bee and is promoted as a health tonic. However there is no evidence it has any health benefit and in fact can be potentially dangerous and even fatal as it can cause severe allergic reactions in asthma and allergy sufferers. It should not be given to infants or young children. Products containing royal jelly must have a warning statement on their labels.

References.

1. *Composition of Foods, Australia. Volume 5. Nuts, Legumes, Beverages Miscellaneous Foods.* 1990 AGPS, Canberra
2. McMaster P, Piper S, Schell D et al. *A Taste of Honey.* J Paediatr. Child Health 2000;36(6); 596-597.
- 3 *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents and Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Professionals.* NH&MRC 2003. www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/dietsyn.htm
3. *Honey : What's the buzz?*. Choice Magazine June 2001 pp 8-9.
- 4 *What's the buzz about Honey?* Baby Feeding News (New Zealand), No. 14, April 1997.
- 5 FSANZ. Food Standards Code. *Mandatory Warning and Advisory Statements and Declarations Standard 1.2.3.*



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6. FSANZ Food Standards Code. *Foods For Infants. Standard 2.9.2*
7. www.capilano.com.au
8. www.medihoney.com.au