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APITHERAPY

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Apitherapy, or bee therapy, is the use of products of the common honeybee for therapeutic purposes. The term comes from the Latin *apis*, which means “bee”. Honeybee venom, bee pollen, raw honey, royal jelly and propolis are the products generally considered to have medicinal effects.

The history of apitherapy extends back to ancient Egypt, Greece and China. Even Hippocrates used bee venom to treat arthritis and other joint problems.

The five popular honeybee products work in different ways to treat various ailments and conditions.

Bee venom contains a number of powerful anti-inflammatory substances, including adolapin and melittin. Melittin stimulates the production of cortisol, a natural steroid that also acts as an anti-inflammatory. Bee venom therapy is often used for conditions that involve inflammation, such as tendinitis, bursitis, rheumatoid and osteoarthritis. Because of its anti-inflammatory properties, bee venom is commonly used to treat diseases such as arthritis, bursitis and tendinitis. It also used to relieve chronic back and neck pain. Bee venom can also help break down and soften scar tissue, flattening scars and lightening them. Bee venom therapy is additionally reported to decrease spasms and fatigue in multiple sclerosis and to increase stability of the patients.

Bee pollen contains vitamins, minerals and protein. It is commonly used as an energy-boosting dietary supplement. Bee pollen is a useful treatment for seasonal allergies because ingestion of small amounts creates pollen resistance.

Raw honey is a quick source of energy and a natural storehouse of B vitamins and various minerals. It has mild antibacterial and antibiotic properties, can help soothe sore throats and suppress bacterial growth, particularly in open wounds.

Royal jelly is a milky substance produced in the salivary glands of worker bees as a food source for the queen bee, extends the queen’s life and enhances her fertility. Royal jelly contains ingredients capable of lowering cholesterol levels in the blood. It also appears as an ingredient in women’s cosmetics.

Propolis is a sticky resin that seeps from the buds of certain trees and oozes from the bark of others. Worker bees collect it, add their salivary secretions to it and use propolis to coat the inside of the hive. Propolis contains antibacterial compounds and can be effective as a salve for cuts and bruises. It is also a source of flavonoids.