The Buzz on health benefits of bee pollen

By: Dr. Alyssa Musgrove

We’ve all heard about the numerous health benefits of raw honey but the same honeybees responsible for honey actually produce something even more nutritious and beneficial to our health: bee pollen.

As bees buzz from flower to flower the pollen collected from various blossoms is mixed with a small dose of nectar from the bees’ salivary glands. This mixture is then placed in small “baskets” on their hind legs to be taken back to the hive as food for the colony. As these microscopic pollen particles accumulate on the legs, they begin looking like little balls of yellow fuzz. Beekeepers use special devices called “pollen traps” to collect this pollen as the field bees return to their hives.

Research has shown bee pollen to be one of nature’s most nourishing foods. Rich in vitamins, minerals, proteins, lipids, fatty acids and enzymes, bee pollen acts as an antioxidant to help us fight free radicals. Bee pollen also contains antibacterial, antifungal and antiviral properties that stimulate our immune system, reduce inflammation, enhance energy and support the cardiovascular system. In fact, it has been reported that regular ingestion of bee pollen in the diet decreases low-density lipoproteins (LDL) and increases high-density lipoproteins (HDL), which helps normalize cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

In 1948, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) published a very important article on bee pollen in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*. According to the article, there was a delay in the development of mammary tumors and some mice became tumor-free following ingestion of mice chow mixed with bee pollen. Additionally, the high concentration of RNA and DNA nucleic acids in bee pollen have been shown to help prevent the premature aging of cells and stimulate the growth of new skin cells. Bee pollen stimulates blood supply to skin cells and helps with detoxification. The result is healthier, younger looking skin that is less vulnerable to wrinkles.

Bee pollen may offer relief for allergy sufferers, as well. Utilizing a technique called desensitization, a person can ingest a small amount of the allergen (in this case bee pollen), to stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies that will eliminate the effects of allergy symptoms and reactions when exposed to the offending substance. It is advised to start taking bee pollen at least six weeks before allergy season begins and continue throughout the season for maximal benefit.

Perhaps most intriguing, bee pollen can boost energy of high-performance individuals, enhancing athletic performance and strength naturally. Here is what the Finnish coach Antii Lananaki had to say after his track team swept the Olympics in 1972, “Most of our athletes take bee pollen food supplements. Our studies and experience show it significantly improves their performance. There have been no negative results since we have been supplying pollen to our athletes.”

You can purchase bee pollen from a local beekeeper you trust (I buy mine from the local farmers market to make sure that the pollen is free from pesticides and that the bee colonies are not harmed or treated with chemicals). You can also find bee pollen in most health food stores.

Bee pollen pellets or granules can be swallowed alone, added to smoothies or sprinkled over salads. The granules can be blended or ground and mixed with honey, yogurt or food items of your choice. Pollen pellets can be added to warm water and left for two to three hours as they crack and release their nutritional value. You then can drink the liquid or mix with fruit or vegetable juice to gain awesome bee pollen benefits.

It is safe for most people to take bee pollen by mouth, however there are some caveats. If you are allergic to bees or pollen, you should start slowly – taking just one teaspoon of pollen a day. If you notice any itching, swelling, light headedness or shortness of breath after consuming bee pollen, stop taking it immediately. Additionally, women who are pregnant should ask their healthcare provider before using bee pollen, as it may stimulate ovarian function.

Grab your bee pollen now to boost your nutrient intake naturally as studies show it contains nearly all nutrients required by the human body to thrive.