

How are raw honey and regular honey different?

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Many people believe that raw honey provides more health benefits than regular honey. Is raw honey more healthful, and what are the differences?

Honey is a sweet, syrupy, golden-colored liquid made by honeybees. Honeybees store honey in the beehive to use for food and nutrients. Raw honey comes directly from the hive while regular honey undergoes processing before being bottled.

In this article, we look at the differences between raw and regular honey, including processing, health benefits, uses, and possible risks.

Raw honey vs. regular honey

People use honey for food and medicine. Humans may have been using honey medicinally for as long as **8,000 years**.

Originally, people would have used raw honey, but today, most honey on supermarket shelves is processed, usually through pasteurization, which involves intense heating. Many of these processed types of honey may contain added sugars.



Raw honey comes straight from the hive.

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Raw honey comes straight from the honeycomb. The beekeeper will usually just filter the honey to remove small bits of debris, including pollen, beeswax, and parts of dead bees. They do not pasteurize the honey.

Raw honey appears cloudy or opaque because it contains these extra elements. It is still safe to eat.

What is regular honey?

Regular, or pasteurized honey, is clear and smooth. The pasteurization process improves the honey's appearance, increases its shelf-life, and kills yeast cells that can affect the taste of the honey.

However, some people believe that pasteurization reduces the number of [antioxidants](#) and nutrients in the honey.

How do they differ?

Raw honey is cloudy while regular honey is clear. Raw honey tends to have more variation in color and texture than regular honey. The color of raw honey may change depending on what flowers the bees pollinated.

While no large studies have confirmed that raw honey is more nutritious than regular honey, some small studies suggest that raw honey may offer extra health benefits.

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Benefits

Studies show that raw honey contains a variety of beneficial ingredients.

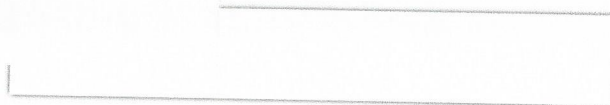
Raw honey contains specific components that can offer health benefits. Pasteurization and other processes may remove or reduce some of these elements, which include:

- bee pollen, which has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties
- bee propolis, a glue-like substance that helps keep the hive together
- certain [vitamins](#) and minerals
- enzymes
- amino acids
- antioxidants

There is a lack of controlled studies comparing pasteurized and raw honey. However, some sources report that pasteurized honey contains few — if any — of the health benefits of raw honey. Because pasteurization exposes the honey to high temperatures, it may destroy or remove honey's natural properties.

This means that raw honey may offer more powerful health benefits, in terms of healing wounds and fighting infections, than regular honey.

Many studies have found that raw honey has health benefits. Usually, these benefits come from natural ingredients that regular honey may not contain.



Raw honey contains bee pollen

Pasteurization of honey removes bee pollen.

A [2015 review study](#) about the benefits of bee pollen reports that it has:

- antioxidant properties
- anti-inflammatory effects
- antibacterial and antifungal action
- pain-relieving properties

These properties make bee pollen a useful addition to honey and can contribute to honey's natural ability to heal wounds and kill bacteria.

Bee pollen also contains amino acids, vitamins A and C, and small amounts of nutrients including [calcium](#), [magnesium](#), and sodium.

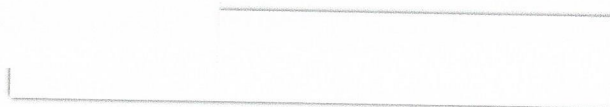
Raw honey contains bee propolis

Bee propolis is the sticky substance that bees use to build their hives and hold the structures together. This glue-like substance not only helps the bees, but some scientists believe that it is healthful for humans as well.

A [review study from 2017](#) reports that bee propolis, found in raw honey, may have:

- anti-inflammatory effects
- anti-cancer and antiulcer action
- antifungal effects

Bee propolis also contains B vitamins, vitamins C and E, magnesium, [potassium](#), and beneficial enzymes.



The appearance of the honey product can help a person work out whether it is raw. Regular honey looks very clear and smooth, while raw honey tends to have a mixture of colors and a cloudy or creamy appearance.

Raw honey is widely available in stores and at farmers' markets. People can also choose between brands of raw honey [online](#).

Raw honey may crystallize more quickly than regular honey. Placing the jar of honey in a pot of hot water will melt the crystals and turn it liquid again. Be careful not to overheat the honey, as this may destroy some of its nutrients.

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Other types of honey

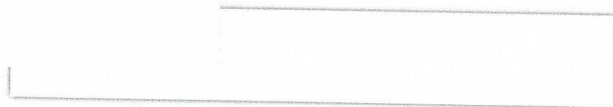
There are many different types of honey, each with their own characteristics, and some people may find it confusing to work out their differences.

Common types of honey and their properties are as follows:

- **Raw honey** — comes straight from the hive and is available in filtered or unfiltered forms.
- **Regular honey** — pasteurized and may contain added sugars.
- **Pure honey** — pasteurized but contains no added ingredients.
- **Manuka honey** — made by bees that feed on the manuka bush. It may have additional health benefits.



Regular honey may contain added sugars.



Therefore, if a person is looking for honey that contains bee pollen and other beneficial ingredients, they will need to make sure that the label states "raw."

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Risks

It is safe for people to consume both raw and regular honey, though it is a good idea to avoid types of honey that contain added sugars.

Both raw and regular honey **may contain** tiny amounts of a bacteria known as *Clostridium botulinum*. This bacteria can cause **botulism**, which is a rare form of **food poisoning**.



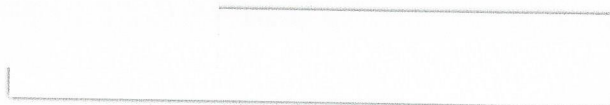
Infants under 12 months old must not eat honey.

Honey is safe for most people over 12 months of age. However, infants 12 months of age and younger **should not** eat any honey, including raw and regular honey. A baby's digestive tract has not yet developed enough to fight off the bacteria.

In rare cases, people who have a severe pollen allergy may react to raw honey, according to the **American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology**. People who have severe pollen allergies should speak with a doctor or allergist before eating or using raw honey.

People who are allergic to bee pollen should also avoid raw honey and other bee products.

How to find raw honey



Some people believe that pasteurization removes some of the healthful antioxidants in honey.

There are no official studies on how pasteurization changes antioxidant levels in honey, but studies show that heating processes decrease the antioxidant level [in other foods](#).

Raw honey contains flavonoids and phenolic acids that have antioxidant properties. Antioxidants reduce oxidative [stress](#) in the body. Research has linked oxidative stress to many chronic health conditions, including [cancers](#).

[Studies suggest](#) that the antioxidants in honey may have anti-cancer effects against different types of tumors.

The types of antioxidants found in raw honey vary depending on the kind of flowers that the bees pollinated.

Regular honey may contain sugars or additives

Some regular honey products contain added sweeteners, such as high fructose corn syrup.

[Studies show](#) that some products labeled as "honey" may not be 100 percent real honey, but contain sweeteners, such as brown rice syrup.

Raw honey does not contain any ingredients other than the honey from the beehive.

Is raw honey organic?

Not all raw honey is organic. Organic honey may still have undergone processing and pasteurization.

Some types of organic honey have labels with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) organic seal. This means that the farm that produced the honey follows the USDA's organic guidelines.



- **Acacia honey** — made by bees that feed from the flowers of the black locust tree. It is often lighter than other types of honey.

Summary

There are no definitive studies that confirm whether raw honey is better for a person's health than regular or pasteurized honey. However, experts have found several possible health benefits linked to some of the ingredients in raw honey, including pollen and bee propolis,

Pasteurization may damage or destroy antioxidants and other beneficial elements in honey. The process of pasteurizing honey can make honey smoother and more aesthetically appealing, but it may also reduce its health benefits.

Because raw honey contains the original natural ingredients without processing, it may be the better choice for people who use honey for health reasons.

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