

## The 'buzz' about honey and seasonal allergies

By Lyn Poll, M.S.

SIA Prevention Services

It's that time of year: Your box of tissues never leaves your side and your eyes may as well be made of sand. That's right, it's allergy season. Of course, you can rely on over-the-counter medications or try to stay inside, but have you heard that honey might help with seasonal allergies?

While doctors and scientists are skeptical about the benefits of local honey to relieve allergies, many people praise its medicinal benefits. One of these is my husband, who for years has been putting local, raw honey in his coffee and swears it has reduced, if not alleviated, his seasonal allergy symptoms.

So, what's the real "buzz" on honey and its effects on seasonal allergies? I wanted to know if my husband was on to something. Here's what I found:

Consuming raw, local honey to alleviate allergy symptoms is not a ridiculous idea. The theory that honey can help with seasonal allergies is based on the same science behind allergy shots, known as immunotherapy. This is where small doses of an allergen are injected into the

body to help build up natural immunity. So, it's thought that honey, which contains small amounts of pollen that often cause us to sneeze and wheeze, might help in the same way.

The research on honey and allergies is limited. In fact, only two studies have been done and they contradict each other.

A [2002 study in Connecticut](#) divided allergy sufferers into three groups. Group one had local raw honey. Group two had commercially produced honey. Group three got a placebo (corn syrup with synthetic honey flavoring). The allergy symptoms didn't vary significantly among the three groups.

A [2013 study in Malaysia](#) had one group of people with seasonal allergies consume raw honey while a control group consumed a placebo (honey-flavored corn syrup). Both groups also were given an antihistamine. There was no difference in symptoms after four weeks, but the researchers found an improvement in allergy symptoms in the honey group after eight weeks. That improvement lasted a month after the group stopped using honey.

**LOCAL HONEY**

for Allergies?

The RAW Truth!

Furthermore, the American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology suggests there are a couple of reasons why honey may not be an effective treatment for allergies:

- Bees don't follow a consistent honey "recipe," so it's hard to know how much and what kind of pollen you're getting from raw honey. In contrast, scientists know exactly what's in allergy shots.
- The pollen in honey is gathered where bees buzz — on flowers. Flower pollen isn't typically what causes annoying seasonal sniffles and irritated eyes. The pollen from trees, grasses and weeds is what causes the irritating symptoms of allergies.

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## Save those permission slips

It may be tempting to clear out your files as you prepare for the end of the school year, but don't throw away any signed permission slips and waivers you received during the school year. All permission and activity forms should be kept for at least one year after the conclusion of the current school year. Check with your district for any additional requirements it may have regarding documentation of school activities.



- Honey as allergy remedy
- The many benefits of sleep

## The 'buzz' about honey

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So, honey might help, but scientists have reasons to doubt honey as a cure-all for seasonal allergies.



But what if, like my husband, you want to try this naturopathic remedy? What do you look for when purchasing this natural elixir? According to one naturopath, for honey to be most effective it must fit the following criteria:

- **Raw** – Raw honey is best because pasteurizing destroys the beneficial pollen and filtering removes much of it.
- **Local** – It should be sourced locally so that it contains the pollen of the local plants you have problems with.
- **Seasonally Appropriate** – If you have fall allergies, you need to use raw, local honey that is harvested in the fall. If you buy raw, local honey that's harvested in the spring, you won't receive the benefit of allergy relief because the pollens to which you are allergic will not be found in this honey.

Although science has yet to confirm that honey is effective in allergy relief, some naturopathic remedies may genuinely make you feel better. These studies suggest that the results are most likely the placebo effect, but the placebo effect can be helpful too. If you believe the honey helps, then the honey helps. All that matters in the end is that you feel better, and if eating an ooey, gooey tablespoon of honey enables you to spend summer days outside in the grass, you should go for it. Worst case scenario is that you're consuming a delicious natural sweetener that's less of a blood sugar rush than table sugar. Best case scenario is you're helping your allergies. Might be time to see what all the "buzz" is about.



## May is Better Sleep Month

*Getting enough sleep is one of the most important things we can do for ourselves*

By Eric Thygesen

SIA Prevention Services

How important is sleep? From a survival standpoint sleep makes no sense. Our consciousness completely shuts off, making us extremely vulnerable. Matthew Walker, professor of neuroscience and psychology at UC Berkeley and founder/director of The Center for Human Sleep Science, describes it best: "You're not finding food, you're not reproducing, you're not finding a mate, you're not caring for your young, and worst of all, you're vulnerable to predation. ...If sleep doesn't support an absolutely vital set of functions, then it's going to be the biggest mistake the evolutionary process ever made." To risk our survival, sleep must be extremely important.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a third of US adults report that they get less than the recommended seven hours or more of sleep per each 24 hours. Insufficient sleep has been linked to Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, dementia and depression. Inadequate sleep also can lead to poor work performance, less focus, irritability, motor vehicle crashes and work-related injuries.



There are two forces that determine sleep: chemical forces and circadian forces. The chemical forces that determine sleep are adenosine, cortisol, epinephrine, adrenaline and melatonin. Adenosine is the hormone that drives our sleep hunger. When we wake up in the morning, adenosine starts to increase in our brains. The longer we're awake, the more adenosine there is in our systems and the sleepier we become. When these hormones start to peak, we get an overwhelming desire to sleep. For most, this sleepy feeling will begin within 12 to 14 hours of being awake.

Circadian forces are driven by a part of the brain that responds to light. Circadian forces are like an internal clock that determines when we should be asleep or awake. It's like a rising and falling wave. It repeats the same way every day. When light hits our eyes in the morning our brain releases cortisol and epinephrine. These hormones start a timer. When the timer ends at night, it signals our brain to release melatonin, the hormone that makes us feel tired and sleepy.

Sunlight reaching our eyes at certain times of the day plays a large role in our sleep drive. It's currently recommended that we get five to 30 minutes of early morning sunlight in our eyes,

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## Better Sleep Month

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which triggers the release of adenosine, cortisol and epinephrine. One to two hours after sunrise is the optimal time to do this. This makes us more alert, focused and awake. One to two hours before sunset, it's recommended that we do the same thing. The low horizon light signals our brain that night is coming, which triggers melatonin and makes us sleepy. Done daily, this helps set our circadian rhythms, allowing for a longer sleeping window.



To make improvements in sleep quality and quantity we must be intentional. Planning to sleep and wake at the exact same time daily is a good place to start. In short, when it's time to sleep, go to bed, no matter what. Synchronizing the circadian and chemical forces is the goal. With consistency the body will naturally wake up and fall asleep when it's supposed to. Just like the

sun rises and sets when it's supposed to.

Indoor lighting can hinder our sleep. When sleeping, try to keep the room as dark as possible. If lights are on, our eyes perceive the light as daytime, keeping us awake and making it harder to fall asleep. Turning all lights and screens off before bedtime tells our brain it's time to shut down for the night. All lights should be off between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m. This means overhead lighting, lamps, TV, phones/tablets and computer screens.

Cut off caffeine consumption around 2 p.m. Caffeine has an impact on wakefulness by blocking absorption of adenosine, the hormone that drives our sleep hunger. When caffeine is consumed, it blocks the uptake of adenosine just as our sleep hunger builds and builds. Caffeine's effect typically lasts about five to six hours, which means that after that, all the sleep drive that's been accumulating comes rushing back into our system. It's why some people may feel sleepy in the afternoon.

Keeping the room temperature around 67°F has been shown to be optimal for most to achieve good quality sleep. During sleep, our body temperature cools down and when we're about to wake up it starts to rise. Creating optimal environments allows these changes to come naturally, helping us fall asleep and achieve good quality sleep.

Eating too close to bedtime can increase body temperature, which is why a two-hour window before bed will allow digestion to occur and give the body a chance to cool down.

Following these helpful tips can improve sleep. Quality sleep can improve focus, mood, alertness and energy levels. Getting the recommended seven or more hours of sleep each night has been proven to decrease many health risks and the benefits are so enormous that it seems logical for us to focus more on getting the proper amount of sleep. Two thirds of our lifetime should be spent sleeping. What a waste of time if it were not important, right?

### References

[Matthew Walker](#) - Professor of neuroscience and psychology at the [University of California, Berkeley](#), he is also the founder and director of the [Center for Human Sleep Science](#).

[Andrew Huberman](#) - Neuroscientist and tenured professor in the department of neurobiology at the Stanford School of Medicine

## Health and safety in the spotlight during May and June

*May highlights good posture and heat illness awareness*

Modern technology has been shown to be a large contributor to postural health problems, which is why posture-related back problems are the third leading reason for all doctor visits. Studies confirm that posture has a huge effect on health, appearance and attitude, which is why the ACE – Awareness, Control and Environment – model can help you improve and maintain good posture. As May is Posture Month, **find out more about the ACE model, check out [posturemonth.org](http://posturemonth.org) and take the “31 Days to Stronger Posture” challenge.**

**May 26 is Heat Safety Awareness Day** and for many the end of May signals the unofficial start of summer. This is an excellent time to remind workers about the dangers of heat stress both on and off the job. With temperatures beginning to climb and the amount of outdoor work and play increasing, a focus on prevention and first aid for conditions such as sunburn, heat rash, dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke can mean the difference between life and death. **To learn more about ways to avoid heat-related illnesses, check out [nsc.org](http://nsc.org) or download the free safety training app at [www.nsc.org/safety-training/first-aid/emergency-medical-response-app](http://www.nsc.org/safety-training/first-aid/emergency-medical-response-app) for life-saving steps at your fingertips.**

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- Clever hotel hacks
- New EAP program set to start

## Some ingenious hotel hacks worth knowing about

Schools are out, summer has officially begun, and you can't wait to feel the sand between your toes, hear the roar of a rollercoaster, relax by a pool, or take the trip of a lifetime. Whatever your perfect vacation entails, it will likely involve a hotel stay. Whether you've booked a five-star luxury hotel or a Super 8 off the highway, an active imagination, some simple engineering wizardry and the internet can help you find clever ways to take your hotel stay to the next level – or at least make it livable. Here are a few favorites from [www.buzzfeed.com](http://www.buzzfeed.com) and [www.mentalfloss.com](http://www.mentalfloss.com):

- **Curtains in your hotel room don't close all the way?** Close stubborn hotel room curtains using an industrial-strength clothes hanger from the closet. Their clips will pull the fabric together and keep the curtains shut.
- **Grossed out by germey hotel TV remotes?** Take the plastic liner from the ice bucket, or a shower cap, and wrap that nasty thing up. Carrying sanitizing wipes when you travel also will enable you to wipe it clean.
- **Always leaving your charger behind?** Attach your car keys to the charger so you literally won't be able to leave the hotel without it.
- **Nowhere sanitary to keep your toothbrush handy?** Take a paper cup, turn it upside down and stab a hole in the bottom of it.
- **Not enough counter space in your hotel room?** Use the ironing board in the closet. This also can be used as a desk if the hotel desk or chair is too low.
- **Got dirty clothes?** Grab the dry-cleaning bag from the closet and stuff your dirty items inside. Also works great for shoes.
- **Need a good safe place to stash your cash while sightseeing?** An empty tube of Chapstick can do the trick.
- **No USB port?** If you can't find a free outlet or one within easy reach for charging electronic devices, there might be a USB port available on the hotel television set.

These are just a few of the many ingenious hotel hacks to try. Click on the links above to find more; they can help make your next hotel stay more enjoyable. Happy travels!

## New EAP begins in July

SIA will have a new Employee Assistance Program partner beginning July 1. The new program will be through Optum and will provide similar services, including counseling, management consulting, trainings, and financial, legal and ID theft support. Critical Incident Responses Services (CIRS), training and development for managers, WorkLife services and much more also will be available. All districts currently in the SIA EAP will be transitioned to Optum.

The Managed Health Network (MHN), which had been our EAP provider, terminated its program earlier this year. If you're currently seeing a counselor through MHN's program, we encourage you to find out if the counselor is part of the Optum network. If not, please reach out to Teresa Franco at [tfranco@sia-jpa.org](mailto:tfranco@sia-jpa.org) and she'll provide information for your counselor or information on how to find a new counselor under the Optum program.

Additional information about Optum's services will be available through your HR department/district soon.



June focus on family fitness •  
Free virtual trainings •



wellness  
& safety



## Upcoming FREE virtual trainings

SIA provides the staffs of our member districts with virtual training on a variety of personal and professional topics. To learn more about any of the training courses listed below, contact [tfranco@sia-jpa.org](mailto:tfranco@sia-jpa.org). You can also learn of future events by visiting our website at [www.sia-jpa.org](http://www.sia-jpa.org).

05/03 - <a href="#">Family Communication by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
05/08 - <a href="#">Heart Health by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
05/10 - <a href="#">Enhancing Resilience During Change by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
05/17 - <a href="#">Wellness Through Resilience and Work-Life Balance by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
05/22 - <a href="#">Introduction to Diabetes: Understanding the Basics by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
05/24 - <a href="#">Creating a Respectful &amp; Professional Work Environment by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
06/01 - <a href="#">Job Search Strategies by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
06/02 - <a href="#">Workplace Violence Prevention by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
06/05 - <a href="#">Communication in the Culturally Diverse Workplace by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
06/06 - <a href="#">Understanding Your Personal Workstyle by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
06/07 - <a href="#">Managing Responses During Customer Interactions by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
06/08 - <a href="#">Working Together Why Inclusion Matters by MHN</a>	5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

## QUOTE TO NOTE

*"Like a welcome summer rain, humor may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air and you."*  
– Langston Hughes



## Health and safety *(continued from page 3)*

### June focuses on family health, fitness and safety

June 10 is Family Health and Fitness Day, sponsored by the National Recreation and Park Association, and is an opportunity for families to pursue fitness together. Walking, hiking, biking and swimming are all ways parents and children can exercise together and have family fun in our nation's parks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that regular physical activity can help adults and children lower the risk for health problems now and



in the future. Check out family-friendly activities at your local parks. Learn more at [nrpa.org](http://nrpa.org).

June is National Safety Month and therefore an opportunity to focus on how to keep our surroundings safe and free from danger. Learning to be proactive and anticipating potential disasters can make our workplaces and homes safer for employees, coworkers and loved ones. Check out three ways you can celebrate National Safety Month at [nationalsafetymonth.com](http://nationalsafetymonth.com). For more information on safety in the workplace, look at [nsc.org](http://nsc.org).

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