

10 brilliant uses for honey

1 Make natural peanut butter creamy again

It wasn't until you were about to bake peanut-butter cookies "for Santa" that you noticed the jar of natural peanut butter in the fridge had become hard and lumpy. Before you count your losses, stir 1 tsp. of honey into the jar. Natural peanut butter tends to dry out and clump over time because it lacks sugar—which is commonly used in processed foods to preserve moisture and freshness. Honey's natural sugars restore the spread's creaminess so you can continue with your baking.



2 Help a bed wetter stay dry

If your little one is stressed about nighttime "accidents," give him a spoonful of honey before bedtime. Honey contains the minerals calcium and magnesium, which prevent the bladder spasms that can cause those untimely leaks. Bonus: The sweet substance acts as a natural sedative by increasing the body's level of *tryptophan*, an amino acid that boosts production of the sleep-inducing brain chemical *serotonin*. He'll doze off without fear of waking up wet.



3 Glue a gingerbread house together

You've finally figured out why your kids refuse to eat the gingerbread house you make from scratch year after year: They can't stand the taste of the sugar glue that holds everything in place. (And you thought they couldn't be too to dismantle your beautiful creation!) For a tastier alternative, pour ½ cup of honey into a bowl and microwave for 12 seconds. Then apply to the confection where needed. The sticky spread will adhere the gingerbread pieces to one another—making the holiday staple look and taste delicious.

Main photo: Jenny Achison. Hair: Ane Vega for Agency Grand. Makeup: Gregg Hubbard for Agency Grand. Stylist: Abby Johnson. Other photos: iStockphoto.com

4 Soothe and soften chapped lips

Skiing, sledding or just strolling to your car in the wintertime can take a toll on your lips, making them dry and cracked. To remedy, squeeze a drop of honey onto your finger and apply to lips. The natural sweetener is *hygroscopic*, meaning it draws moisture to your pucker to keep it hydrated. What's more, it creates a protective seal to allow the damaged skin to repair itself.

5 Disinfect small cuts in a pinch

Your son came home from the indoor skate park with a scraped knee. No surprise there, but when you reached for your go-to antibiotic ointment, it wasn't in the cabinet. Instead, after you wash and dry the area, apply a thin coat of honey and cover with a bandage. *Propolis*, an antibacterial compound in honey, kills germs to reduce the risk of infection. Plus, because the sweetener is a humectant, it will retain water molecules to keep skin moist and inhibit scarring.



6 Prevent fruit stains from setting

Oops! Your daughter was helping you make berry cobbler when some of the fruit filling dribbled onto her shirt. To salvage the garment, rinse the area with warm water, then cover with a layer of honey. Let sit for 30 minutes, then rinse again and launder as usual. Honey acts as an oxidizer to break down grime so the stain vanishes in the wash.

7 Naturally zap bad breath in seconds

You're sailing through your morning routine faster than ever—that is, until you discover you're out of mouthwash. Simply mix 1 Tbs. of honey with 1 cup of warm water, gargle for 30 seconds and rinse. The nectar's antiseptic agents eliminate the plaque-causing bacteria that are to blame for less-than-fresh breath.

8 Keep leftover meat fresh twice as long

Your family loves turkey meat loaf, but you suspect they like the leftovers—cold, on a sandwich—even more. To help the meat stay fresh longer, coat the loaf with honey before baking. Not only does honey slow the oxidation of cooked ground turkey, researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign found that it does so without sweetening the taste.



9 Sip away a holiday hangover

An eggnog here and a glass of wine there can add up to a few rough mornings during the holiday season. An easy-to-swallow cure? Add 1 Tbs. of honey to your morning tea. The sweetener contains a concentrated dose of *fructose*, a natural sugar that helps speed the absorption of alcohol from last night's drinks. Bottoms up!

10 Take hair from dull to dazzling

Deep-conditioning treatments are a must in cold weather due to daily blow-drying and the effects of indoor heating. Restore lackluster locks with a homemade hair masque: In a heat-resistant container, mix 1 Tbs. of honey with 1 Tbs. of olive oil and microwave for a few seconds. Once the mixture is cool to the touch, apply to hair from root to tip using a comb. Wrap your head with a warm towel and leave on for 30 minutes, then shampoo as usual. The heat from the warm towel causes hair cuticles to open, allowing the conditioning agents in the honey and olive oil to penetrate and fortify each strand. The result? Hair with healthy shine—without a trip to the salon!