

Health More health news

Categories

- U.S. news
- World news
- Politics
- Business
- Sports
- Entertainment
- Health
 - Diet and nutrition
 - Women's health
 - Men's health
 - Kids and parenting
 - Sexual health
 - Mental health
 - Pet health
 - Fitness
 - Aging
 - Heart health
 - Cancer
 - Skin and beauty
 - Health library
- Tech & science
- Travel
- Weather
- Local news
- Browse
- Video
- Photos
- Community
 - Disable Fly-out

Marketplace

- Shopping via MSN Shopping
- Start a business Entrepreneur.com
- Dating via PerfectMatch.com
- Real estate via HomePages.com
- Credit score via Experian
- Investments \$7 online stock buys
- Online degrees from Kaplan University
- Home equity

Honey making a medical comeback

Potent type used as antibiotic amid fears of drug-resistant superbugs



J.p. Moczulski / AP file

Workers package Medihoney wound and burn dressing at the Derma Sciences manufacturing facility in Toronto.

Ap Associated Press

updated 12:11 p.m. ET Dec. 26, 2007

TRENTON, New Jersey - Amid growing concern over drug-resistant superbugs and nonhealing wounds that endanger diabetes patients, nature's original antibiotic — honey — is making a comeback.

More than 4,000 years after Egyptians began applying honey to wounds, Derma Sciences Inc., a New Jersey company that makes medicated and other advanced wound care products, began selling the first honey-based dressing this fall after it was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Called Medihoney, it is made from a highly absorbent seaweed-based material, saturated with manuka honey, a particularly potent type that experts say kills germs and speeds healing. Also called Leptospermum honey, manuka honey comes from hives of bees that collect nectar from manuka and jelly bushes in Australia and New Zealand.

[Story continues below ↓](#)

advertisement



Antibiotics becoming ineffective

Derma Sciences now sells two Medihoney dressings to hospitals, clinics

Sponsored links

Resource guide



Dating - Get two months free!



Home equity Wells Fargo



Get your degree online



Find your next car



Search for Senior Housing



Find your dream home today!



Find a business to start



Fast \$7 trades, no limit



Check your 2007 Credit \$0

Post-holiday sales

- Computers
- HDTVs
- Smartphones
- Clothing



and doctors in North and South America under a deal with supplier Comvita LP of New Zealand. Derma Sciences hopes to have its dressings in U.S. drug stores in the next six months, followed by adhesive strips.

Comvita, which controls about 75 percent of the world's manuka honey supply, sells similar products under its own name in Australia, New Zealand and Europe, where such products have been popular for over a decade.

"The reason that Medihoney is so exciting is that antibiotics are becoming ineffective at fighting pathogens," said Derma Sciences CEO Ed Quilty.

Another big advantage, he said, is that the dressings' germ-fighting and fluid-absorbing effects last up to a week, making them convenient for patients being cared for at outpatient clinics or by visiting nurses. They also reduce inflammation and can eliminate the foul odors of infected wounds.

Since receiving FDA approval, Medihoney has brought in sales of \$150,000 in 10 weeks and Quilty plans to nearly double his 15-person sales force in 2008 thanks to the two new Medihoney products.

Healing wounds

Honey dressings and gels, as well as tubes of manuka honey, have been gaining in popularity overseas, fueled by scientific reports on their medical benefits and occasional news accounts of the dramatic recovery of a patient with a longtime wound that suddenly healed.

Regular honey can have mild medicinal benefits. A study published Dec. 3 showed it helps to calm children's coughs so they can sleep. But manuka honey is far more potent, research shows.

Dr. Robert Frykberg, chief of podiatry at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Phoenix, said the Medihoney product has worked on about half the patients with diabetic foot ulcers who have used it.

He said the Medihoney dressing can also prevent the dangerous drug-resistant staph infection known as MRSA from infecting open wounds.

"It's been used on wounds where nothing else will work," said biochemist Peter Molan, a professor at the University of Waikato in New Zealand who has researched honey and other natural antibiotics for 25 years.

CLICK FOR RELATED CONTENT

[Healers share their favorite natural cures](#)
[Even fake acupuncture eases back pain](#)
[Got a cold? Zinc lozenges won't help](#)

He's found manuka honey can kill the toughest bacteria even when diluted 10 times and recommends it especially for people with weak immune systems.

"There's more evidence, clinical evidence, by far for honey in wound treatment than for any of the pharmaceutical products" for infection, Molan said. However, it won't work once an infection gets in the blood. "It's not a miracle."

Some U.S. hospitals and wound care clinics are already using Medihoney dressings to treat patients with stubborn, infected wounds from injuries or surgical incisions and nonhealing pressure ulcers on diabetics' feet, which too often lead to amputations.

Kara Couch, a nurse practitioner at Georgetown University Hospital's Center for Wound Healing in Washington, said it works well for patients who have "wound pain" or infected wounds.

One patient who had an open wound that didn't heal for a few years "healed 90 percent in three weeks," she said, adding that the usual rate for chronic wounds is barely 10 percent a week.

Fewer complications

David Crosby, a retired insurance claims examiner from Hanover, Massachusetts, began using Medihoney two months ago on a 2

1/2-year-old burn on his leg after high-tech treatments did not help. The burn's size has shrunk by half and it continues to heal.

"At this stage, any improvement's better than nothing," Crosby said.

Dr. Craig Lambrecht, a North Dakota emergency physician, started using a paste version of Medihoney while serving with the National Guard in Iraq last winter.

At a military clinic for Iraqi children, he used it on patients with severe burns from cooking fuels, open fires and explosions. He said Iraqi families soon preferred the honey over other treatments because it was natural and because the honey dressings don't need to be changed as often as traditional ones. The children also healed more quickly and with fewer complications, he said.

After seeing its success in Iraq, Lambrecht, who has five children of his own, is a fan.

"I would use the Medihoney on burns on my children, as the first choice, without question," he said.

Copyright 2007 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Rate this story Low  High

Current rating: 4.5 by 1457 users • [View Top Rated stories](#)

 [Print this](#)  [Email this](#)  [IM this](#)

MORE FROM MORE HEALTH NEWS

[Next →](#) [Worms infect more U.S. poor than thought](#)

[Small dairy's milk likely source of 2 deaths](#)
[Health alert issued after beef stolen](#)
[Dust to dust? More ask for eco-friendly funerals](#)

[Honey makes medical comeback](#)

[Worms infect more U.S. poor than thought](#)
[Green beans recalled over botulism risk](#)
[FDA finds more deaths from painkiller patch](#)
[What was ailing Tiny Tim?](#)
[7 great medical myths revealed](#)
[Very obese less likely to get kidney transplant](#)
[More Health News Section Front](#)

Add **More Health News** headlines to your news reader:

    

[More RSS feeds from MSNBC.com](#)

<h4>Top msnbc.com stories</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Huckabee: Romney 'dishonest'Bhutto's husband, son to lead partyIndia offers 'wombs for rent'Record number of data breaches in '07Cheap surgeries can have big cost	<h4>NBC News highlights</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Dateline investigation: Can terrorists get passports?Bhutto's life of privilege, controversyWhere is Tara Conner, other newsmakers?TODAYShow.com most popular stories of '07Happy 50th, Matt Lauer!
---	--

SPONSORED LINKS [Get listed here](#)

