

Sweet Buzz

HONEY IS AN ENERGY ELIXIR THAT CAN INCREASE STAMINA AND HELP YOUR MUSCLES RECUPERATE **BY VANESSA G. AHERN**

You probably know that a drizzle of honey on breakfast cereal or yogurt is a more nutritious option than a heap of white sugar or the contents of a pastel-colored packet. But have you ever thought about using honey before and after workouts?

In fact, honey's naturally occurring antioxidants make it a perfect workout fuel. "Unlike sugar and other sweeteners, honey has a wide variety of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants," says Katherine Beals, PhD, RD, associate professor of nutrition at the University of Utah (Salt Lake City). "As a general rule, the darker the honey, the higher its phenolic content, which provides the antioxidants."

The floral origin of honey is what determines its antioxidant levels. For instance, a dark buckwheat honey can have 20 times more antioxidants than clover honey. Monique Ryan, MS, RD, certified specialist in sports dietetics and author of *Sports Nutrition for Endurance Athletes*

(VeloPress, 2007) says adding 50 grams of honey (2–3 tablespoons) to your breakfast or preworkout snack will raise your glucagon levels, which provide the energy you need to power through training and are low in the morning.

In addition, science has found that honey can help you recover from the most demanding workouts. Researchers at the University of Memphis Exercise and Sports Nutrition Laboratory (Tennessee) measured the physical aftereffects of consuming a honey-protein shake vs. a maltodextrin-protein shake after a vigorous weightlifting workout. Subjects who drank the honey-protein shake sustained blood-sugar levels for at least two hours after their workout.

"By maintaining blood-sugar levels while you exercise, you can go for the extra burn by delaying fatigue," Beals says. "Glucose depletion is often the cause of workout burnout and poor performance, but honey can enhance glycogen resynthesis."

