

good health

Hannah Waterman's

DIABETES SHOCK

Most of us associate type 1 diabetes with childhood, but as *New Tricks* star Hannah Waterman found, around five per cent of cases are diagnosed as adults. In fact, it can come on at any time up to the age of 40. 'I was recently diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, which is very unusual,' explains the actress, 36. She fell ill on holiday in Australia when pregnant with her son, who's now three months old, and had to spend four days in intensive care.

'Although the pregnancy triggered my diabetes, I would have developed it at some point,' she admits. Known as 'juvenile diabetes', type 1 occurs because the body can't produce enough insulin, which is necessary to control blood sugar. If you're destined to get it, you will – and it can't be controlled by a lifestyle change. Hannah will now be on insulin for the rest of her life. 'I was lucky doctors picked up on my problem when they did,' she says. For more information, visit www.diabetes.com.



Hannah has re-evaluated her life since she was diagnosed with diabetes

NEWSFLASH

GOOD NEWS IF YOU'RE A NATURAL-BORN WORRIER

– chances are you'll live longer than more carefree friends as you're more diligent healthwise.

ASPIRIN COULD PROTECT AGAINST SKIN CANCER.

In a study, people who took aspirin at least once a week cut the risk of developing it by 40 per cent.

IF YOU SUFFER WITH TENDONITIS, tuck into a curry.

Research has found that curcumin, which is found in turmeric, reduces the inflammation in tendon diseases.



WEBSEARCH

ARE YOU FIT AND HEALTHY FOR YOUR AGE?

Do you know which checks you should get from your GP? LifeCheck is a simple, government-backed test that offers advice tailored to your age, sex and lifestyle. Take the test online now at www.nhs.uk/lifecheck to find how to improve the health of all the family.

Words: Karen Cross Photos: WILKIN, LORDBIS, GETTY, ALAMY Always consult your GP before starting any supplements

New on the SHELVES



Although we can't cure the common cold, new research shows taking a zinc supplement can reduce its severity and duration by 42 per cent. Keep Nature's Plus ImmunActin Zinc Lozenges (£9.40 for 60, www.nutricentre.com) handy and take as soon as symptoms appear. For sore throats, try a spoon of BronchoMel honey (£25 for 120ml, from health food shops). Its natural antiviral and antibiotic qualities help fight winter bugs.



3 WAYS TO... BEAT DRY EYES

We're more likely to get dry eyes as we age. If you suffer, try these:

- 1 Drink plenty of water and avoid caffeine (coffee, chocolate) as it dehydrates the body and eyes.
- 2 Use a humidifier or lightly spray curtains with water several times a day to keep the air moist.
- 3 Use eye drops such as Systane Ultra Lubricant Eye Drops, £9.59 (from pharmacies), to rebuild the tear film.



THE AVERAGE BRITISH ADULT SUFFERS WITH A HANGOVER

FOR 24 DAYS A YEAR – THAT'S FOUR YEARS OVER A LIFETIME!



Behind the counter at Hive, a honey shop in south London, James Hamill is decanting honey into jars. The shop is an emporium of all things bee-related (Hamill's family have been beekeeping since 1924) and the place to go for a wobbly honeycomb or beekeeper's suit. Apart from delicious honeys, a section is dedicated to medicinal honey that aids everything from coughs to hay fever. 'I did think it was a placebo effect at first,' says James, who treats his own hay fever with his blend of London and countryside honeys, royal jelly and pollen. 'But people come in and say that they haven't taken it for a summer and their hay fever is back.'

Whilst there's been a worrying decline in bee numbers (which may be recovering, with the number of amateur beekeepers doubling since 2007 and 80,000 hives now registered with the British Beekeeping Association), humble honey itself has had a face-lift. Until recently, it was just

World Wars. But the problem is that all those years of use as a folk remedy are being offered as proof of honey's effectiveness alongside sketchy scientific evidence. Take LifeMel, for instance, which 'primarily aims to relieve the frequent side effects caused by chemotherapy and radiation treatments,' and is made by bees fed on Siberian ginseng and *Uncaria tomentosa* among other herbs. Only one study in Israel (published in peer-reviewed journal *Medical Oncology* in 2006) looked at the claim, and it only involved 30 patients - the rest of the evidence is anecdotal. That does not mean that it *can't* do what it claims, of course, but the study concluded that more research is needed to confirm its results.

Other claims are less disputable: all honeys contain hydrogen peroxide and are acidic, making them antibacterial and antiseptic. Studies have shown that some honeys aid wounds and increase MRSA's susceptibility to antibiotics. In fact, honey-based topical

benefits. In general, honey has a lower glycaemic index than sugar, as well as high antioxidant levels. There's also research into the pre-emptive antioxidant capacities of some honeys, looking at the way they seem to tie up free iron in the body, pre-empting - rather than intercepting - free radicals.'

A teaspoon is not enough

There's also no need to take a daily teaspoon of honey for wellbeing, either. 'There's no evidence for doing that,' says Professor Molan. 'White blood cells have been shown to be stimulated by honey in the lab, but we've no idea if it works in the body. The chances are that even if you swallowed a whole jar on an empty stomach, it would not reach the levels required to fight an infection in the body.'

Dr Sarah Schenker, from the British Nutrition Foundation, agrees. 'A teaspoon of honey isn't going to magic away a bad life. The big question is how much we need to eat to benefit, versus the calorific costs? Only if you're very active might you be able to afford the extra sugar.'

Ultimately, more research is needed. The European Food Safety Authority reviewed all the literature and concluded there wasn't enough evidence to link honey and many of its health claims. That's not to say it isn't an amazing foodstuff - but it's worth thinking twice before spending £20 on something trendy to spread on your toast. ■



Honey is antibacterial and antiseptic, but bigger claims need more research

something that sat in the cupboard alongside the Marmite - not a remedy for a myriad of health conditions. Now Kylie is reported to take a daily spoonful, while Katherine Jenkins has manuka honey before performing. Honey is now also sold as a potent superfood - Holland & Barrett, for example, stocks over 40 types, while big claims are being made about particular honeys' health credentials, from having antibiotic and antiseptic properties to easing the effects of chemotherapy and even fighting antibiotic-resistant MRSA. All this from a liquid made from plant nectar regurgitated by bees? No wonder we got through 17.2 million litres of it last year.

Miracle cure?

These miraculous honeys do come at a price, though - LifeMel, the Israeli brand Kylie favours, is £37.50 for 120g; GastroMel and DefenceMel, two new functional honeys, cost £25 and £20; manuka can retail for over £10 a jar, with Maharishi around £9.

But is honey really a functional food, or are we being duped into adding expensive dollops of sugar to our diets? The answer isn't straightforward. For millennia, honey has been used as a medicine: the Ancient Greeks and Egyptians used it as an antiseptic, while honey poultices were used on soldiers' wounds in the First and Second

medicines are available on the NHS and there are trials using honey in nebulisers for cystic fibrosis, bronchitis, and lung infections.

The magic of manuka

Up until now, most research has focused on manuka honey. It is almost exclusively produced in New Zealand (manuka is the New Zealand name for the tea tree), which has led some rival producers to ask whether the New Zealand government has mobilised a bit of a PR campaign behind it. Professor Peter Molan at Waikato University in New Zealand, an expert on medicinal honey, disagrees. 'The special antibacterial activity that manuka has is quite different from other honeys.' This is why jars of manuka have numbers on the side, specifying their UMF - Unique Manuka Factor (interestingly, Maharishi honey states that its UMF levels are even higher). But Professor Molan adds: 'The manufacturer should specify that it's non-peroxide activity they've measured because all honey has antibacterial activity from hydrogen peroxide, but this is destroyed by an enzyme in the body.' If they measure the wrong activity, chances are it's just regular honey, so check the jar.

But Professor Molan sees ordinary honey as equally beneficial until more research is done. 'There's no need to pay the much higher price for manuka for nutritional

CAN HONEY CURE MY...?

Hay fever Local unpasteurised (raw) honey may ease hay fever. But you won't get benefit from highly processed honey as it does not contain live pollen - and it's the live pollen that desensitises you.

Sore throat Manuka honey has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties, meaning it can help relieve sore throats and help heal wounds faster than pharmaceutical products.

Zapped energy It's not honey, but bee pollen is a great supplement for boosting stamina. Try GFM Organic Pollen granules, £5.25 for 110g (gfmhoney.co.uk)

Hangover According to The Royal Society of Chemistry, the fructose found in honey is essential in helping the body breakdown alcohol into harmless by-products. You read it here first.