



## Can Manuka Honey Help With a Respiratory Infection?

As we spend more time indoors during the fall and winter, respiratory infections become more common due to low humidity and increased contact. While these infections are inconvenient and concerning to a person's health, there are ways to combat them.

In this article, we'll explore Manuka honey's effectiveness in preventing and supporting respiratory infections. According to research, it may be beneficial in helping with common respiratory infections like coughs, sore throats, common colds, flu, and sinus infections. We'll explore this in the context of upper respiratory infections (sinus, common cold, stuffy nose) and lower respiratory infections (pneumonia, bronchitis). Read below to learn more.

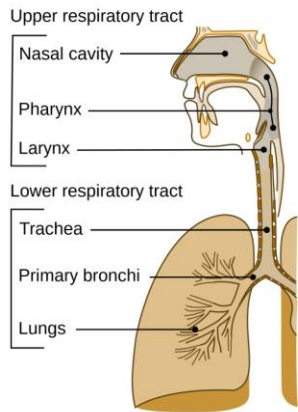
### What Is a Respiratory Infection?



A respiratory infection is any infection that affects the body parts involved in breathing - the throat, sinuses, lungs, and airways. A lot of respiratory infections get better on their own without treatment, but sometimes you might need to see a doctor.

Common symptoms associated with respiratory tract infections include coughing, sneezing, sore throat, muscle aches, wheezing, headaches, fever, lethargy, and a stuffy or runny nose. You may experience some or all of these symptoms.

## Types of Respiratory Infections



Respiratory infections are classified according to the part of the respiratory system they affect. They are normally divided into upper respiratory infections and lower respiratory infections.

### A. Upper Respiratory Infections

Upper respiratory infections usually affect the throat and sinuses. Common infections include the common cold, sinusitis, tonsillitis, and laryngitis.

#### 1. Common cold

A common cold is caused by viruses that cause inflammation of the nose and throat membranes. Common colds can result from 200 different viruses, but rhinoviruses cause most colds. Contrary to what we've been made to believe, cold weather doesn't cause a cold.

The common cold is spread when a healthy person inhales airborne droplets from the sneeze or cough of a sick person. It can also be spread when a sick person touches you or touches a surface (like a tabletop) that you then touch.

Most colds happen during fall and winter because:

- More people are indoors and close to each other.
- There's lower humidity which causes dry nasal passages - they are more susceptible to cold viruses.



Common cold symptoms include:

Blocked/stuffy/runny nose

Scratchy throat

Sneezing/ coughing

Muscle aches

Headache

Raised temperature

Chills

Fatigue

Loss of taste and smell

Watering eyes



Watery nose discharge

Sore throat

A cold typically starts 2 or 3 days after the virus enters the body. Symptoms present for a few days to several weeks. General practitioners do not recommend antibiotics for common colds as they are caused by viruses, not bacteria.

## 2. Sinusitis

Sinusitis is the swelling of sinuses caused by a viral or bacterial infection. Sinus infections occur when there is fluid buildup in the sinuses. The fluid buildup creates a favorable environment for germs to grow. It can also result when cold or flu viruses spread to the sinuses through the airways. Viruses cause most sinus infections, but some occur as a result of bacterial infection. Sometimes, an infected tooth or fungal infection can cause sinus inflammation.

Sinusitis normally resolves on its own after two or three weeks. However, medication can help manage symptoms.

Common sinusitis symptoms include:

Blocked/ runny/ stuffy nose

Sore throat

Bad breath

Cough



Sinus headache

Pain/ pressure in the face

Mucus drip down the throat

Reduced sense of smell

### 3. Tonsillitis

Tonsillitis is the infection of the tonsils located at the back of your throat. Tonsillitis is normally caused by viruses that cause the flu and cold. However, in some cases, it may be caused by streptococcus bacteria. In such cases, it is known as strep throat. It is common in children, but adults can get it too.

Common tonsillitis symptoms include:

Sore throat

Pain when swallowing

Fever

Coughing



Headache

#### 4. Laryngitis

Laryngitis is the inflammation of the voice box or vocal cords in the throat that results from irritation, overuse, or a viral infection. You are at a higher risk of developing laryngitis if you have an upper respiratory infection like a cold or sinusitis, speak or sing too much, or are exposed to harsh irritants like smoke and chemicals. Laryngitis normally resolves on its own within a week or two.

Common laryngitis symptoms include:

Voice loss

Sore throat

Dry throat

Hoarse voice

Dry cough

Itchy throat



## B. Lower Respiratory Infections

Lower respiratory infections typically affect the lungs and airways. Common infections include bronchitis, bronchiolitis, chest infection, pneumonia, and cystic fibrosis.

### 1. Bronchitis

Bronchitis is an infection that causes the main lung airways to be inflamed and irritated.

Bronchitis is a viral infection that results from the same viruses that cause colds and flu. In some isolated cases, it may be caused by bacteria. Smoke and other chemical irritants can also cause bronchitis.

The main symptom of acute bronchitis is a hacking cough and mucus, which normally lasts up to 3 weeks.

Common bronchitis symptoms include:

Sore throat

Headache

Runny/blocked nose

Muscle aches

General feeling of tiredness

### 2. Bronchiolitis

Bronchiolitis is a chest infection that is common in children under the age of two. It is caused by a viral infection, in most cases, the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). RSV is ubiquitous and



spreads easily through sneezing and coughing. RSV infection outbreaks happen every winter, and reinfection is possible as a previous infection doesn't guarantee lasting immunity.

Early symptoms of bronchiolitis are similar to a cold - sneezing, coughing, blocked nose, etc. See the complete list below:

Sneezing	Coughing
Blocked/ runny nose	Mild fever
Wheezing	Becoming irritable
Difficulty feeding	Shallow, quick breathing

### 3. Pneumonia

Pneumonia is a bacterial or viral infection that causes the inflammation of air sacs in the lungs. The air sacs may fill with fluid or pus, which results in fever, chills, and a cough with phlegm, among other symptoms. The most common causes of bacterial pneumonia are *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (pneumococcus) and *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* in children. Viral pneumonia is





commonly caused by Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and Influenza viruses. Sometimes it is also caused by SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).

Other types of pneumonia include:

- Aspiration pneumonia – Occurs as a result of breathing in harmful substances, vomit, or foreign objects.
- Fungal pneumonia – This type is more likely to affect people with a weakened immune system.
- Hospital-acquired pneumonia – This type of pneumonia develops in a hospital setting. It is possible to get pneumonia while being treated for another condition. It is also common among patients who are hooked up to ventilation machines in hospitals.

Pneumonia symptoms can develop quickly within a day or two or may manifest more slowly over time. Common symptoms include:

Fever	Sweating/ chills
Fatigue	Difficulty breathing
Cough with phlegm	Chest pains when breathing



Rapid heartbeat

Nausea/ vomiting

#### 4. Cystic fibrosis

Cystic fibrosis is a genetic condition caused by a faulty gene that affects how salt and water move in and out of cells. It causes sticky mucus to build up in the lungs and digestive system, which leads to the blockage of tubes and passages throughout the body. When mucus builds up in the airways, it traps germs and bacteria that may lead to infection. It also makes it difficult to breathe. Currently, more than 30,000 people in the US live with cystic fibrosis and there is no known cure."

Common symptoms of cystic fibrosis include:

Wheezing/ difficulty breathing

Frequent chest infections

Difficulty adding weight

jaundice

Coughing

Trouble with bowel movements



Infertility (in men)

Coughing

Antivirals and antibiotics have a role to play in treatment, as viruses and bacteria cause most respiratory infections. When consumed daily, Manuka honey may provide a line of defense or a quick first response to the onset of symptoms that may prevent an infection (viral or bacterial from taking hold and spreading). However, it is not a replacement for medicine. In case you have any of the conditions listed above, always consult with your doctor.

With that being said, Manuka honey can be used to complement conventional medicine and as a preventative supplement.

## Manuka Honey Properties That Help Fight Respiratory Infections



Manuka honey contains two beneficial properties as a result of its unique chemical composition that makes it a great solution for preventing and managing respiratory infections.

### 1. Anti-Viral Properties

Manuka honey has strong antiviral properties that demonstrate potential medicinal value, as evidenced by some research studies. In a 2014 study investigating the anti-influenza viral effects of honey, researchers reported that manuka honey displayed strong inhibitory effects against the influenza virus. [\[1\]](#) In a 2016 study evaluating the anti-influenza viral activity of MGO against influenza B strains, the results showed that “MGO has potent inhibitory activity against influenza B viruses, including NA inhibitor-resistant strains.” [\[2\]](#)



## 2. Antibacterial Properties

Manuka honey has the highest antibacterial activity among all honeys due to the presence of the unique compound: methylglyoxal. Its antibacterial properties have been studied extensively and have demonstrated potential medicinal value. This is an important area because of the growing resistance to antibacterial medicine. Some studies concluded that the over-prescription of antibacterial agents is hastening resistance in the population. One area of particular concern is antibacterial prescriptions written for conditions where they may not help. For instance, antibacterial prescriptions are not helpful for a lot of upper respiratory tract infections as they are caused by viruses and not bacteria. Due to this, researchers are exploring alternative therapies like honey that may be effective against these infections. [3]

In a study conducted by Dr. Rowena Jenkins and colleagues, preliminary results showed that Manuka honey might be effective in supporting antimicrobial-resistant infections in cystic fibrosis. The team used lung tissue from pigs and grew bacterial infections that are similar to those seen in patients with cystic fibrosis. They then used Manuka honey to treat the tissues and discovered that the honey killed antimicrobial-resistant bacteria by 39% compared to 29% by antibiotics. When honey was used together with antibiotics, the killing of resistant bacteria reached 90%. [4]

Given its potential effectiveness, Manuka honey can also be used to prevent secondary bacterial infection, which occurs when you have a low immune system due to a primary infection possibly caused by a virus.

## Manuka Honey and Respiratory Tract Infections



In the spirit of keeping up to date with current research, we found a new 2022 study that revealed that Manuka honey might be beneficial in treating respiratory tract infections, especially those caused by *Mycobacterium abscessus*. "Mycobacterium abscessus is an



opportunistic human pathogen of increasing concern, due to its ability to cause aggressive pulmonary infections (especially in cystic fibrosis patients).” Researchers reported that Manuka honey can be used to inhibit *M. abscessus* and works synergistically with conventional drugs for the treatment of infections. The paper further states, “These findings demonstrate the utility of manuka honey for incorporation into nebulized antibiotic treatment for respiratory infections, in particular *M. abscessus*.” [5]

### 1. Manuka Honey and Sinuses

Stuffy sinuses can be triggered by different things, from allergies to inflammation and excess fluid. However, eating Manuka honey for sinus infection may help decongest sinuses because of its robust antiviral properties that help fight off some viruses that cause the common cold and flu. It also has strong anti-inflammatory properties that can help reduce swelling in the nasal passages. [6] Manuka honey is used in sinus rinses to help fight the bacteria and microbes responsible for sinus congestion. Manuka honey also may help keep airways hydrated, thus reducing irritation.

### 2. Manuka Honey and Sore Throat

Manuka honey may be great for managing sore throat symptoms because of its antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. Research suggests that infections are caused by biofilm-forming bacteria (*Streptococcus*) and using Manuka honey for sore throat may help break down the biofilm and inhibit bacterial growth. It is also useful in reducing the harshness of symptoms. This may lead to a quicker healing time and less pain.

### 3. Manuka Honey and Cystic Fibrosis

A 2021 study tried to determine the feasibility of Manuka honey as an irrigation treatment for cystic fibrosis sinusitis and its effectiveness. It established that Manuka honey fights biofilms that contribute to bacterial persistence in cystic fibrosis sinusitis. Further, the Manuka honey irrigations were well tolerated, but it also recorded the need for a future trial that would help draw definitive conclusions. [7]

A subsequent randomized controlled trial was organized this year, where 30 adults with cystic fibrosis will be recruited and randomized to either the control or intervention group. Both groups will follow a sinus rinse protocol for 30 days ( $\pm 7$  days); the control group will use the standard of care rinse, and the intervention group will use a manuka honey rinse. This trial will help establish the effectiveness of a manuka honey-infused sinus rinse solution on patients diagnosed with cystic fibrosis suffering from sinusitis. [8]

Learn more about the use of [Manuka honey for cystic fibrosis](#) in this comprehensive blog.



## How to Use Manuka Honey for Respiratory Infections



Anecdotal evidence shows that honey may be used in managing colds and coughs. You can use it as a defensive measure or as a preventative measure, as indicated below.

1. To use it as a preventative measure:
  - Consume 1-2 teaspoons per day from the jar for immune support.
  - Add it to water with lemon or ginger for a health boost.
  - Use it to sweeten plain yogurt.
2. To use it defensively at the onset of symptoms:
  - Consume 2-3 teaspoons per day out of the jar. We recommend using 500+ MG Manuka honey or higher if you have it.
  - Coat your throat with a teaspoon of Manuka honey to soothe a sore throat.
  - Dilute one teaspoon in a saline solution (distilled water) and use it as a sinus rinse using a nasal irrigation device.
  - Add 1-2 teaspoons of Manuka honey to ginger and lemon drink.



## Conclusion



From my personal experience and that of my family you can also benefit from using Manuka honey for cough. Consuming a couple of teaspoons at the onset of symptoms can really help mitigate symptoms and manage a cold. We've also experienced similar results by diluting some Manuka honey in a saline solution and using it as a sinus rinse.

Manuka honey is a great natural remedy for strengthening the immune system and keeping respiratory infections at bay. We believe that every household should have a jar of Manuka honey in the house during the fall and winter seasons for symptom relief and management. To get high-quality, premium Manuka honey today, [browse our honey collection](#).

At Bees and Trees, we are committed to [producing the best quality Manuka honey](#) and providing education on how to use Manuka honey for the best results. Any research presented in this blog is a collation of different studies available to us at the time of writing and publishing. We encourage you to seek professional medical care and discuss any points of interest with your doctor with regard to symptom management. Thank you for reading through to the end. We hope this blog has been helpful.

### FAQ:

1. Is honey good for chest infections?

Honey, including Manuka honey, possesses antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. Several studies have demonstrated that these properties can help soothe sore throats, reduce coughing, and provide relief from the symptoms of chest infections. The natural sugars in honey can also provide energy and hydration, which can be helpful during illness.

Many individuals also report experiencing relief from chest infections when consuming honey. Its soothing properties can make it a comforting remedy during respiratory illnesses.



2. Does Manuka honey help with cough and phlegm?

There is a body of anecdotal evidence that reports relief from cough and phlegm when using Manuka honey. Its thick consistency can help coat the throat, providing a soothing effect, while its potential antimicrobial properties may contribute to alleviating symptoms.

3. Is Manuka honey good for sinus infection?

While there isn't extensive scientific research specifically focused on the use of Manuka honey for sinus infections, it may help decongest sinuses because of its robust antiviral properties. It also has strong anti-inflammatory properties that can help reduce swelling in the nasal passages.

4. Is Manuka honey good for sore throat?

Manuka honey can be beneficial for sore throats. Its natural antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties can help soothe a sore throat, reduce inflammation, and provide temporary relief from discomfort. Anecdotal evidence reports positive results from using Manuka honey at the onset of a sore throat or cough.

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