FIND OUT IF ONE OF MOTHER NATURE'S MOST PERFECT FOODS CAN BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM AND YOUR ENERGY LEVELS

Bees. One could consider them Nature's workaholics. Their days are spent maintaining the hive, collecting pollen, serving the queen bee—and unknowingly producing a nutritional supplement that may help build up the immune system, increase energy and improve strength and endurance.

Bee pollen—simply pollen collected by bees—is considered by some to be one of Mother Nature's perfect foods. And no wonder: it's rich in protein (35-40 percent); contains almost all known minerals, trace elements, enzymes and amino acids; and is high in B-complex vitamins. It's also got some vitamin C and E. This mix of nutrients is behind its reputation as an energy source.

Taking bee pollen in small doses may help combat allergies by allowing your body to build up an immunity and become desensitized to allergens. Here's how to try it:

About four to six weeks before allergy season, start taking bee pollen to help defend yourself against hay fever. Using a tincture, begin with one drop, and increase by one drop a day up to 20 drops, says Ken Babal, CN, a Los Angeles-based nutritionist. When allergy season begins, increase your dose, if needed, by five drops a day until you find a level that works for you—usually between 20-70 drops daily.

You can find bee pollen as granules, pills or tincture, and how you take it is a matter of preference. Drop tincture or sprinkle granules in cereal, or mix it into a drink. You can even eat it out of the palm of your hand. "Because it is a very concentrated food, you may want to start with a couple of granules under your tongue to make sure you're not allergic to it," suggests Babal. (A small percentage of the population may be allergic; symptoms include hives, wheezing, itchy throat or other discomfort.) And if you are allergic to bee stings, use extreme caution in taking any bee products.

It's smart to stick with a single bee pollen brand and type once you have determined dosage because pollen content may vary among products.

If you're taking granules or pills for supplementation, Babal suggests these dose guidelines: \( \frac{1}{4} \) teaspoon of granules or two to four tablets. After adding bee pollen to your diet, you may find yourself buzzing around the office alert and full of energy. Just beware of adopting the bee's workaholic habit.
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