

Asset Health *Talk*

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

September 2015

What's All the *Buzz* About Bees?

September is **National Honey Month** and to celebrate, we're going to honor honeybees. These hard-working insects are often misunderstood. They play an integral role in our ecosystem and food supply as pollinators. Pollinators are a key part of the process in the reproduction of flowering plants and the production of many fruits, vegetables and nuts—even chocolate and coffee! In fact, honeybees directly or indirectly contribute to billions of dollars of crops in the United States each year.

Without pollinators, the majority of plants are unable to produce fruits and seeds. Seeds are particularly important since they're a popular food source for many animals, as well as humans. Uneaten seeds eventually grow to become new plants, which helps maintain plant populations.

How Do Bees Make Honey?

Bees create honey out of nectar and pollen and end up pollinating crops along the way. They start by extracting nectar from a flower using their long, tube-shaped tongue and then store it in their extra stomach, which is called a crop. The nectar mixes with enzymes in the crop to transform it into a substance that's suitable for

long-term storage. The honeybee then returns to the hive and passes the nectar on to another bee by regurgitating it into its mouth. This process is repeated until the partially digested nectar is deposited into the honeycomb.

At this point, it's a thick, sticky liquid. Bees then get all the extra water out of the mixture by fanning the honeycomb with their wings to speed up the evaporation process. Once most of the water content has been removed,

the bees seal the comb using a liquid from their stomach. This eventually hardens into beeswax. Honey can remain stored in the hive away from air and water indefinitely, which provides bees with the perfect source of food during scarce winter months. Not only do bees enjoy their tasty creation, but so do humans and many other animals in the wild.

Unfortunately, the population of wild honeybees is rapidly declining on a global scale due to habitat loss and degradation, which can have serious consequences.

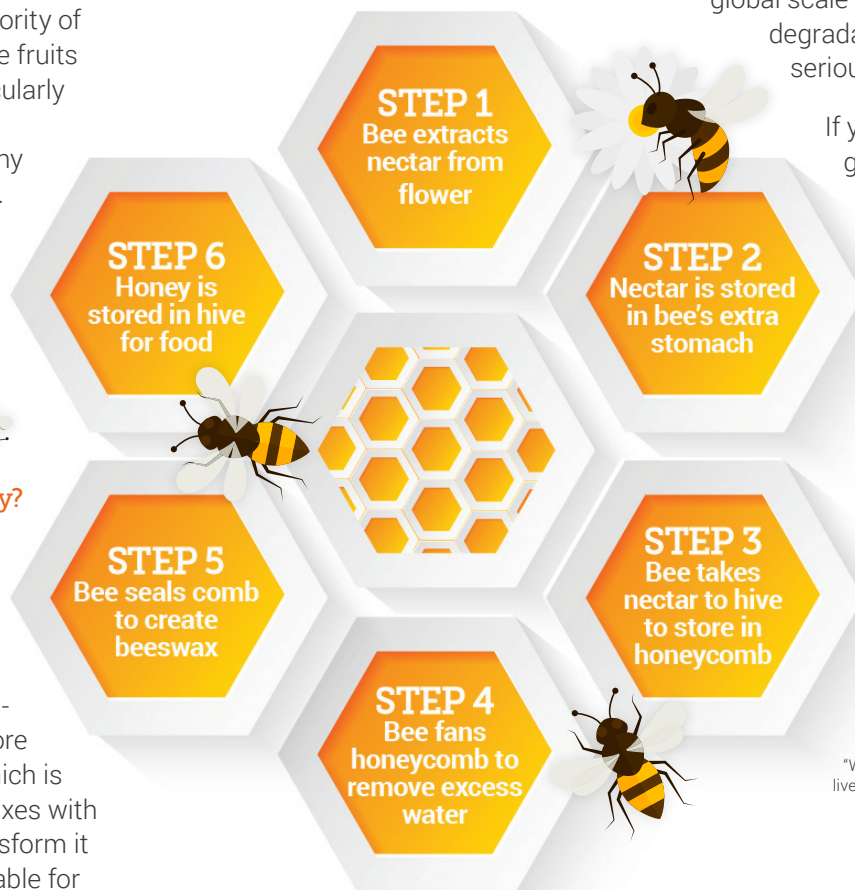
If you'd like to encourage the growth of bee populations, here are a few things you can do:

- Plant a pollinator garden.
- Provide a nesting site.
- Avoid or limit pesticide use.

For more detailed information about ways you can help, visit: <http://www.fws.gov/pollinators/PollinatorPages/YourHelp.html>.

"Pollinators," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [fws.gov/pollinators](http://www.fws.gov/pollinators), June 15, 2015.

"What Is Honey?" Elizabeth Palermo, livescience.com, June 20, 2013.



Could Snacking On This **TINY SEED**

PACK POWERFUL

Benefits?

As we approach the end of summer, there are still flowers bursting into full bloom. One flower in particular houses a tiny secret that can powerfully boost your health – sunflowers! Sunflowers aren't just beautiful, they're also quite nutritious thanks to the edible seeds that they produce. Not only do sunflower seeds contain the highest natural source of the antioxidant vitamin E (just ¼ cup provides you with nearly your entire daily recommended value), but they also contain copper, B vitamins like thiamine, phosphorus, selenium and more! Not to mention, they have an abundance of polyunsaturated fat, also known as good fat. Needless to say, you don't have to feel guilty for indulging in this healthy snack.



Sunflower seeds are often regarded for their ability to combat “bad” cholesterol and strengthen cardiovascular health. They can also aid in the prevention of both cancer and hypertension, reduce headaches and muscle cramps, and support detoxification.

Benefits of Sunflower Seeds:

IMPROVED SKIN: Who doesn't want supple, radiant skin? Since sunflower seeds contain such a mighty dose of the antioxidant vitamin E, eating them may improve skin tone while protecting cells from free radical damage, which is a major health benefit, especially in the aging process.

REDUCED CANCER RISK: Antioxidants found in sunflower seeds are utilized for DNA repair, thus working to slow the growth of mutated cancer cells. Studies show that the nutrients found in sunflower seeds have chemo-preventive compounds that stall early phases of cancer development by shutting off tumor growth.

REDUCED SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION: Feeling blue? Studies suggest that increasing your magnesium intake can significantly reduce symptoms of both anxiety and depression. When magnesium levels drop, serotonin (the feel-good hormone) levels in the brain are inadequate and may lead to feelings of anxiety or depression. Sunflower seeds contain one-third of the amount of magnesium we need each day in just a ¼ cup serving. High levels of magnesium also help to combat osteoporosis, bone loss and muscle cramps.

BALANCED BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS: A well-rounded diet rich in nuts and seeds has been shown to reduce hyperglycemia and normalize blood sugar levels.

ENHANCED THYROID FUNCTION: Sunflower seeds are an excellent source of selenium, which can help combat thyroid diseases, such as hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism.

Need we say more? Grab a handful and start snacking!

“The One Ingredient You Should Add to Your Breakfast Every Day,” Sarah-Jane Bedwell, self.com, June 12, 2015.

“10 Foods Nutritionists Love,” WebMD, webmd.com, Aug. 6, 2015.

“Nutrition and Cancer: A Review of the Evidence for an Anti-Cancer Diet,” Michael S. Donaldson, nutritionj.com, Oct. 20, 2004.

No-Bake Chewy Granola Bars

PREP 5 minutes
COOK 5 minutes
TOTAL 10 minutes

This granola bar recipe is easy to make and combines our two featured foods—honey and sunflower seeds! Whip up a batch to have on hand for a nutritious treat or convenient back-to-school snack.

- ¼ cup coconut oil (or butter)
- ¼ cup **honey** (or other sweetener, such as molasses, agave, etc.)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup old-fashioned oats
- 1 cup nuts/seeds (Try starting with a ¼ cup of **sunflower seeds**, then create an additional ¼ cup mix of nuts and seeds to suit your taste — pumpkin seeds, peanuts, almonds, cashews and chia seeds. You can even add some cocoa nibs or dark chocolate chips for added sweetening.)
- 1 cup chopped dried fruit (Add dried cherries, cranberries, or figs, or omit the fruit altogether.)
- Other spices/flavors (Experiment with 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract and add spices, such as cinnamon, nutmeg and cardamom.)

1. Melt the coconut oil, honey, salt and other spices/flavors in a medium saucepan.
2. When the liquid mixture melts and becomes a bit foamy, turn the heat down to low, add the oats and stir to coat.
3. Add the nuts/seeds and stir to coat.
4. Fold the dried fruit into the mixture.
5. Continue cooking on low heat for two minutes to soften the ingredients.
6. Meanwhile, line a small baking dish with parchment paper or plastic wrap, leaving the sides of the paper/wrap long.
7. Add the mixture to the dish and press it down so it is evenly spread out.
8. Fold the parchment paper/plastic wrap over the granola so the top is covered. Press the granola aggressively so it is as packed and evenly distributed as you can make it.
9. Place the dish in the refrigerator and allow it to cool completely—at least two hours, but overnight is recommended.

10. Remove granola mixture from parchment paper—it should be in one big block. Cut the granola mixture into six to eight bars and wrap them individually in plastic wrap. The bars can be stored in the fridge for about two weeks.

Adapted from bowlofdelicious.com

