

Honey Before Bed

A spoonful for a night-time cough

Traditional preparation

You'll need

1-2 teaspoons honey

Optional: a small mug of warm water or caffeine-free herbal tea

To make it

1. Enjoy the honey slowly from a teaspoon shortly before bedtime.
2. Alternatively, stir it into a comfortably warm drink and sip slowly.

The old tale

A spoonful of honey before bed was a familiar household response to a troublesome cough. No elaborate preparation was needed, just the honey from the cupboard.

What the evidence says

Cochrane's review found that honey probably reduced the impact of acute cough on children's sleep compared with no treatment. Most children received it for only one night, and the evidence had limitations. This concerns sleep disturbed by coughing; it does not prove honey improves dreams, treats insomnia or helps people sleep when they have no cough.

Hive observations

There is no need to heat honey enjoyed straight from the spoon. Try different honeys to appreciate how much their flavours vary.

A sensible precaution

Never give honey to babies under 12 months. Allow hot drinks to cool before serving. A persistent cough needs assessment rather than repeated reliance on a home preparation.

Source: Cochrane: Honey for acute cough
Source: NHS: Cough