Honey could help patients fitted with catheters to keep them free of infection

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A HONEY adored by the rich and famous for its heath-giving qualities could be used to keep medical devices free of infection, according to new research.

Scientists at the University of Southampton found that even small amounts of Manuka curbs the growth of microbes.

The findings, published online in the Journal Of Clinical Pathology, could lead to the honey being used in patients fitted with medical devices, such as catheters, which carry a high infection risk.

Around 100 million urinary catheters, used to drain the bladder of urine, are sold worldwide every year.

Up to one in four hospital inpatients may have to use one.

However, long-term use is linked to inflammations and infections.

Professor Bashir Lwaleed said: “We have been able to demonstrate that diluted honey is potentially a useful agent for reducing biofilm formation on indwelling plastic devices such as urinary catheters.

“Catheter infection rates can account for a large proportion of hospital acquired infections - it is an area of clinical practice that needs addressing.

**We believe that patients might also benefit from honey's anti-inflammatory properties**

Professor Bashir Lwaleed

“We hope that these results may offer an alternative way of preventing such infections.

"We believe that patients might also benefit from honey's anti-inflammatory properties, which are generally stronger in dark honeys, such as Manuka and that antibacterial resistance is unlikely to be a factor when honey is used.”

Honey has been used as a health remedy for centuries and recent research has also suggested that it may have antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties.

Manuka honey is produced in Australia and New Zealand from the nectar of the manuka tree.

Opera singer Katherine Jenkins and World No1 tennis player Novak Djokovic drink it daily while actresses Scarlett Johannson and Gwyneth Paltrow use it on their skin.

Researchers said that further studies in which clinical conditions more closely resembled the flow of liquid in the bladder would be needed before any firm conclusions could be drawn.