Manuka honey could fight off deadly infections in hospital equipment

* [Henry Bodkin](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/authors/henry-bodkin/)

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[Manuka honey](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/wellbeing/5979247/The-benefits-of-Manuka-honey.html) could be a powerful new weapon in the battle against hospital-acquired infections, scientists have revealed.

Researchers at Southampton University found that cleansing medical equipment with solutions derived from the Australia and New Zealand-based honey reduced the ability of potentially deadly bacteria to accumulate on surfaces by more than 75 per cent.

The discovery could transform safety for groups at particular risk of bacterial infections, such as the one-in-four hospital inpatients who use a catheter, thousands of whom suffer [urinary-tract and other infections](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/19/cranberry-juice-can-reduce-need-for-antibiotics-by-combating-uti/) each year.

Harm resulting from use of indwelling urethra catheters costs the NHS £1 billion-2.5 billion and accounts for 2,100 deaths per year, the researchers say.

The use of honey as a health remedy goes back centuries, and recent research has suggested it may have antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties.

The new study, however, is the first of its kind specifically to investigate the potential of mono-floral honey produced exclusively from the nectar of the manuka tree.

The researchers diluted the honey with distilled water to create a range of concentrations, from 3.3 to 16.7 per cent, and applied the solutions to bacterial cultures.

The results showed that manuka honey strongly inhibited the "stickiness" of the bacteria, and therefore the development of a biofilm that could cling to medical equipment.

Dr Bashir Lwaleed, associate professor of health sciences at the University of Southampton, said: “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, which are generally stronger in dark honeys, such as manuka, and that antibacterial resistance is unlikely to be a factor when honey is used.”