

The latest buzz about immune-boosting honey

Day before I telephoned Dr Heime Geffen in Canada. In the month, he had played nine holes of golf, taken out the fish and played bridge. That's not extraordinary for a man of 76, but it was a huge event for him because in October 2006, Dr Geffen was diagnosed with acute myelocytic leukaemia after radiation therapy for another form of cancer. His doctors had abandoned chemotherapy in February this year, because his blood counts were so low. 'I had deteriorated physically to the point where I was virtually bedridden. I couldn't eat, I had sores in my mouth and I felt dreadful,' he says.

Now this turnaround happened has mystified everyone. The most likely, although unlikely, that it could be an instantaneous remission or a delayed reaction to chemotherapy. The other consideration is that, from the start, this former family doctor has been taking twice-daily spoonfuls of Life Mel honey, made by bees that feast on local medicinal herbs and other immune-boosting natural substances. His son-in-law heard about it from a doctor in Israel (where the honey is manufactured), who had read a promising medical report and suggested it would be worth trying.

Within a week of starting the honey regime, Dr Geffen was feeling stronger and his blood counts started to improve. By mid-May, they were virtually normal; he was out of bed and taking short daily walks. He had been having

frequent blood transfusions but no longer requires them.

His daughter Terri is so convinced that the honey has been the trigger for her father's recovery that she passionately wants to make it available to other cancer patients and is importing it into this country, with a percentage of the profits on each jar going to cancer charities. So far, the research is promising but slight: one small study by doctors at the oncology unit of Sieff Hospital in Israel was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Medical Oncology* (vol 23, no 4, 2006), which reported that 12 out of 30 cancer patients given the honey after chemotherapy did not suffer the usual dramatic dip in white blood-cell count (neutropenia), and eight patients reported improvement in quality of life. There are also many anecdotal reports that echo Dr Geffen's experience.

Leading clinical oncologist Professor Karol Sikora considers the Life Mel honey 'interesting – it's plausible that there are natural factors that stimulate bone marrow cells,' but, he adds, 'unfortunately, the research [so far] is not great'.

Dr Geffen says he will go on taking the honey: 'It's not proven but it's made from natural ingredients and there are no side effects. It is worth a try if you are at a dead end, as I was. My life has turned around.'

Life Mel honey, £45 for 250g inc UK p&p, tel: 020 7247 5497, lifemel.co.uk, and Victoria Health, tel: 0800 3898 195, victoriahealth.com



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Sarah reads all your e-mails but regrets that she cannot answer them all personally

Illustrations
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WANT MORE COMFORT
If you're always looking for sensitive-free treats for children could stack up many points by offering delicious (and almost nutritious) organic ice cream. Our testers loved Waitrose Organic Strawberry Ice Cream and Organic Fairtrade Free Ice Cream (£3.49 for 200ml). Meanwhile, Asda Extra Special Ice Cream Cookies & Cream, and Lakeland Style Yoghurt, £3 for 200g, also went down a storm; the latter are not organic but they contain no artificial colours or preservatives.

Pussy willows

Neighbourhood cats (and we do love them, promise!) can develop a naughty habit of using your flower beds as a litter tray. This is a particular worry if you have children as cat poo can carry the toxoplasmosis parasite, which may cause flu-like symptoms and, in severe cases, damage the eyes. A simple, natural solution is to 'plant' a set of willow loops in the ground because cats don't like the feel of them against their whiskers. As well as looking stylish, they work brilliantly, as our tester reports: 'My neighbour's cats now meander on a different route when they visit, avoiding the flower beds they used as a litter tray before.'

Stoppit Cat & Squirrel Barriers in dark or light willow, £8.99 for 20 loops, plus p&p, tel: 020 8399 5777, stoppit.co.uk



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