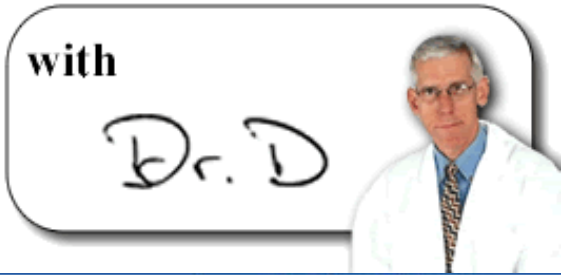




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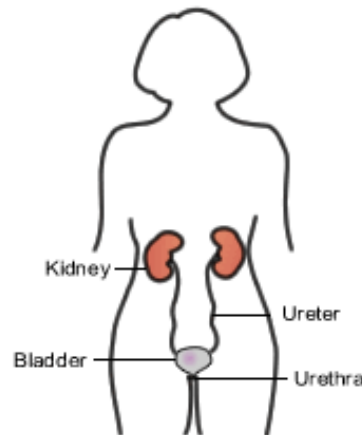
Health Tip: Cranberry Juice and Urinary Tract Infections



Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) are among the most common medical conditions, responsible for more than 7 million doctor office visits each year. Drinking cranberry juice is a familiar home remedy which has been touted as both a treatment as well as a preventive measure for UTIs. The fruit contains organic substances, such as quinic acid and citric acid, which serve to create a more acidic (lower pH) environment in the bladder. Bacteria growth is known to be inhibited when the urine has an acid pH.

Additionally, cranberries contain a substance that is thought to prevent the development of bladder infections by keeping bacteria from adhering to the wall of the bladder.

Only a limited amount of research has been conducted to see if drinking cranberry juice can actually help with urinary tract infections. Before looking at some of this research, it should be understood that there are different types of urinary tract infections, some of which are much more serious than others. Examples of UTIs include: 1) uncomplicated lower UTIs (cystitis or "bladder infections"), 2) upper UTIs (pyelonephritis or "kidney infections"), and 3) UTIs in males that are often due to prostatitis. The seriousness of these different types of infections, as well as their treatment, varies quite a bit. For example, many uncomplicated lower urinary tract infections can be treated as simply as with a single dose of an antibiotic, whereas, hospitalization and the use of intravenous antibiotics may be required for upper UTIs.



Many people, especially women, think of using cranberry juice at the first sign of a UTI. There is no research, however, that has conclusively shown that cranberry juice is effective in treating acute UTIs, even in milder types. There is evidence, however, that indicates that drinking cranberry juice may help in preventing the development of UTI. When the results of 10 studies evaluating the effectiveness of cranberry juice in preventing infections were compiled, the following was found:

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1. Cranberries, in either juice or capsule form, were capable of preventing recurrent UTIs in women.
2. Cranberries were more effective in preventing UTIs in younger study subjects than in elderly men or women.
3. Cranberries were not effective in preventing UTIs in people requiring urinary catheterization, such as those with spinal tract injuries.

It was also noted that in these clinical trials, a number of people dropped out because of the taste or inconvenience of drinking cranberry juice.

While it appears that cranberry juice may be of benefit in preventing lower tract, UTIs, its usefulness appears to be limited. Furthermore, cranberry products by themselves have not been shown to be of benefit in treating acute UTIs. In these infections, particularly those that involve the upper urinary tract, antibiotics remain the treatment of choice. For women prone to recurrent UTIs, however, it is reasonable to consider the use cranberries as an inexpensive, safe measure of prevention.

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