

## Patient Fact Sheet

# CRANBERRY

**CRANBERRY** (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*) is a berry plant native to North America. The berries and berry juice are used both as food and as herbal medicine. It is available in sweetened cranberry “cocktails” that are about 30% cranberry juice, pure unsweetened juice, and concentrated in capsules.

### WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

- ◆ Cranberry is a popular alternative treatment to prevent bladder infections (also called urinary tract infections).
- ◆ It is sometimes recommended for kidney stones.
- ◆ Some herbalists recommend it to treat Candida (yeast) infections.

### WHAT HAVE STUDIES SHOWN?

- ◆ Drinking cranberry juice regularly helps prevent bladder infections in women who are prone to them.
- ◆ There is no evidence that cranberry juice *by itself* is an good treatment for bladder infections.
- ◆ There are no studies of cranberry’s use to prevent or treat bladder infections in men.
- ◆ Herbalists used to think that cranberry juice helped urinary tract infections by making the urine more acid. However, it would take more than a quart of cranberry juice per day to make a significant difference in urine acidity. Instead, studies now show that there are ingredients in cranberries that make it harder for bacteria to stick to the walls of the bladder.
- ◆ Cranberry juice may help decrease urine odor in people with urinary incontinence (leakage).
- ◆ Drinking cranberry juice may prevent or decrease skin irritation around urostomy sites.
- ◆ There is no evidence that cranberry juice can help Candida (yeast) infections.
- ◆ There are no studies of its use for kidney stones.

### WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

- ◆ Allergic reaction is possible but very rare.
- ◆ Upset stomach and diarrhea are possible with large amounts of cranberry juice.

No long-term problems have been found from taking cranberry.

(continued)

## **IS IT SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN?**

Cranberry juice is considered safe for children and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. However, there are no studies of the safety of large amounts of cranberry, or concentrated cranberry products, for children or pregnant women.

## **WILL IT INTERFERE WITH MY OTHER MEDICATIONS OR MY MEDICAL CONDITION?**

- ◆ There are no known problems with taking cranberry during any medical condition.
- ◆ There are no studies of cranberry's interactions with medications.

## **WHAT ARE TYPICAL DOSAGES?**

Doses vary, but some doctors and herbalists recommend the following doses to prevent bladder infections in adults:

- ◆ 1/2 to 2 cups of cranberry cocktail per day, OR
- ◆ 1 tablespoon of pure cranberry juice per day, OR
- ◆ 1-6 hard gelatin capsules (300-400 mg each) twice per day.

Follow your health care provider's instructions.

## **WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?**

- ◆ Do not try to treat a urinary tract infection with cranberry juice alone. If you have a fever, pain or burning with urination or frequent urination, see your doctor or nurse practitioner.
- ◆ Always tell your doctor or nurse practitioner if you are taking any herb, and before starting any new herb. Your health care provider needs to know everything you are taking to help you make decisions about your health care. Herbs can cause problems with other herbs, dietary supplements, or medications.
- ◆ Cranberry products may be contaminated with chemicals, including pesticides and herbicides.

## **SEE ALSO:**

Cranberry Complete Monograph: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/cranberry/cranberry.pdf>

Cranberry Clinician Information Summary:

<http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/cranberry/cranberry.cis.pdf>