

## Patient Fact Sheet

# UVA URSI

**UVA URSI** (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), or bearberry, is a small bush that grows in forests in North America and Europe. The herbal medicine comes from the dried leaves of the plant. It is available as a tincture (in alcohol), in tablets or capsules, and as dried leaves. The main active ingredient is called *arbutin*.

### WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

- ◆ Herbalists recommend uva ursi to treat urinary tract (bladder) infections.
- ◆ It is also sometimes recommended for bladder spasms, urinary incontinence (leakage), and childhood bedwetting.
- ◆ It is sometimes recommended as a diuretic (to decrease fluid in the body) and to help weight loss.

### WHAT HAVE STUDIES SHOWN?

- ◆ In two small studies, some kinds of bacteria would not grow in the urine of people who had taken uva ursi.
- ◆ In one study, women who were prone to **urinary tract infections** (bladder infections) had fewer of them while they were taking uva ursi.
- ◆ There are no studies comparing uva ursi with antibiotics for urinary tract infections.
- ◆ There is no evidence that uva ursi can help **bladder spasms, incontinence, or bedwetting**.
- ◆ There is no evidence that it is an effective diuretic, or that it helps weight loss.

### WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

Side effects may include:

- ◆ Allergic reaction, including itching or hives
- ◆ Upset stomach, vomiting or diarrhea. Taking it with food may help

Uva ursi contains substances that cause kidney damage, liver damage, and cancer in animals. Long-term use is not recommended.

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

Uva ursi is not recommended for children or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

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

- ◆ Uva ursi is not recommended for people with kidney disease or stomach irritation.
- ◆ Tinctures are not recommended for alcoholics, children or people with severe liver disease, because they contain alcohol.
- ◆ Uva ursi is not known to interfere with any medications.

## **WHAT ARE TYPICAL DOSAGES?**

Typical doses for adults are:

- ◆ 500-1000 mg of freeze-dried leaves daily, OR
- ◆ 100-200 mg of standardized extract daily, OR
- ◆ 2-4 ml of tincture (1:5 in 25% alcohol) three to four times daily.

Follow your health care provider's instructions.

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

- ◆ If you have symptoms of a bladder infection (fever, pain or burning with urination, or frequent urination), do not use uva ursi by itself without medical supervision. See your doctor or nurse practitioner.
- ◆ Uva ursi works better when the urine is alkaline. Eating a diet rich in vegetables and fruits can make the urine more alkaline. Taking large amounts of vitamin C or cranberry juice can make it less alkaline and decrease uva ursi's helpful effect.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Herbal products may contain chemicals or other species of plants.

## **SEE ALSO:**

Uva Ursi Complete Monograph: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/uvaursi/uvaursi.pdf>

Uva Ursi Clinician Information Summary: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/uvaursi/uvaursi.cis.pdf>