

The Longwood Herbal Task Force
(<http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/default.htm>) and
The Center for Holistic Pediatric Education and Research
(<http://www.childrenshospital.org/holistic/>)

Clinician Information Summary

CRANBERRY

(*Vaccinium macrocarpon*)

SUMMARY

Cranberry was introduced to European settlers by Native Americans who had long used the ripe fruit for food and medicine. The major clinical use for cranberry is to prevent recurrent urinary tract infections. Initially its benefits were attributed to acidification of the urine, but more recent studies indicate that high molecular weight compounds found in cranberries and blueberries, such as proanthocyanidins, interfere with gram negative bacterial adhesion to bladder mucosa. Randomized controlled trials support the use of cranberry juice as a prophylactic agent for recurrent cystitis in women. There are no data supporting its use in treating renal stones, *Candida* infections or any other medical condition. Cranberries should NOT be the sole treatment for UTI. Cranberries are presumed to be safe for use with other medications and during pregnancy, lactation and childhood.

POPULAR USES: Prophylaxis and treatment for UTI; renal stones; *Candida* infections

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS: Organic acids, proanthocyanidins, Vitamin C, and others

SCIENTIFIC DATA

In Vitro: Cranberry extracts, particularly the proanthocyanidins, interfere with adherence of gram negative bacteria to urinary epithelium. Cranberry also interferes with bacterial co-aggregation associated with dental caries and gingivitis. It does not have anti-*Candida* activity *in vitro*.

In Animals: Studies in mice support Cranberry's effectiveness in decreasing bacterial adherence to bladder wall epithelium.

In Human: Historical uses, epidemiologic data, case series and randomized controlled trials support the use of cranberry as a prophylactic agent for UTI. Case series support its use in decreasing urine odor for incontinent patients.

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TOXICITY AND SIDE EFFECTS

Cranberry seems to be devoid of toxic compounds when used in normal dosages.

Side effects: Diarrhea and stomach upset are possible from large amounts of juice.

Interactions with other medications: None known

Contraindications: None known

Pregnancy and lactation: Appears safe

Pediatric use: Appears safe

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES OR RESOURCES

- HOME: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/default.htm>
- Cranberry Complete Monograph: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/cranberry/cranberry.pdf>
- Cranberry Patient Fact Sheet: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/cranberry/cranberry.ph.pdf>