

# Help Prevent Recurrent Urinary Tract Infections

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The recurrent urinary tract infection (UTI) is one of those nuisance conditions that can play havoc with quality of life, and this particular infection is much more common than most people realize. In fact, one of every two women develop a urinary tract infection during their lifetime, and 20-30 percent suffer recurrent urinary tract infections.<sup>1</sup>

Urinary tract infections are known to be the most common bacterial infection in humans in developed countries. In the U.S., UTIs account for nearly 7 million office visits and 1 million emergency-department visits per year, resulting in 100,000 hospitalizations.<sup>2</sup>

So, What Causes Urinary Tract Infections (and What Are the Risks)?

UTIs can be triggered by intercourse and other sexual activity, but are also common during pregnancy, in diabetics, and in patients with multiple sclerosis, history of kidney stones, stroke and spinal cord injuries, and any condition that affects normal urine flow. (Use of a catheter and weakened immunity also greatly increase risk of urinary tract infections.)<sup>1</sup>

For pregnant women, urinary tract infections can pose an important risk to the mother and the fetus. Pediatric UTIs can also become quite serious. For most adults, urinary tract infections can be successfully treated with antibiotics, but in some cases, an infection can move up the urinary tract and infect the kidneys, which is very serious, and/or can spread into the bloodstream, causing life-threatening sepsis.<sup>2-3</sup>

What the Latest Research Says About Natural Prevention

Fortunately, a daily cranberry drink, or intake of cranberry capsules or tablets, has been shown to reduce the risk of recurrent urinary tract infections in a large meta-analysis study. In this 2017 study, data from 1,498 women indicated that daily cranberry intake reduced recurrent urinary tract infections by 23 percent, as presented by researchers from Tufts University, UCLA and Biofortis Research at the Experimental Biology 2017 event in Chicago. They stated that limited data from subgroup analysis suggested cranberry was more effective when taken in the form of a cranberry capsule or tablet, whereby you are most likely to get a more concentrated dosage of the medicinal ingredients.<sup>2</sup>

However, a recent study involving the consumption of a cranberry drink (250 ml/day) *did* show a 27 percent reduced risk of UTI recurrence in women who had been recently treated with antibiotics for a UTI.<sup>4</sup>

Clinical Takeaway

Over the years, it has been shown that certain ingredients in cranberry, and cranberry extract capsules and tablets, can reduce the ability of *E. coli* bacteria to adhere to the walls of the urinary tract. This makes it easier to eliminate these bacteria during urination.

So, the takeaway message is that if a patient is prone to UTIs, daily consumption of a cranberry drink or supplement may be a prudent way to help prevent the onset of future UTIs.

However, it's important to note that during an active urinary tract infection, cranberry products cannot be used as a *substitute* for antibiotic therapy, but can be taken concurrently with an antibiotic to help enhance the efficacy of the antibiotic treatment. It is also wise to consume a probiotic supplement concurrently with antibiotics to preserve the gut and vaginal microflora.

### *References*

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