

Cranberry Juice and Urinary Infections

One question frequently asked is “Is the use of cranberry juice really effective on the prevention or treatment of urinary infections?” It was thought that having a person drink Cranberry Juice would make the urine more acidic and reduce the number of urinary infections. The thought was that bacteria would be less likely to multiply in acid urine. Current research studies tell us that Cranberry Juice is prevention for urinary infections. Cranberry Juice contains three organic acids: quinic acid, malic acid, and citric acid. Cranberry Juice interferes with the bacteria sticking to the epithelial cells (skin cells) of the urinary tract reducing the risk of urinary infections. Research studies also show that drinking Cranberry Juice can reduce the following: urine odor, burning with urination, the number of blocked catheters, calcium in urine, and the skin damage about suprapubic catheters. Cranberry Juice is considered a preventive measure, not a treatment for urinary infections.

Two studies are presented below:

Study #1: A study compared 150 women who used Cranberry Juice for six months and Lactobacillus drink for one year with a group who did not drink these juices. At the end of six months, study results showed that 16% of the women who drank Cranberry Juice had at least one urinary infection as compared with 39% of those drinking Lactobacillus drink and 36% of those not drinking the juices. The researchers thought that Cranberry Juice helped reduce the number of urinary infections (Kontiohari et al., 2001).

Study #2: This study was conducted with a group of 15 people who had spinal cord injury. The group drank three glasses of water daily for the first week of the study, and then drank three glasses of Cranberry Juice per day for the second week of the study. The researchers found that water did not reduce the bacteria sticking to the epithelial cells. Cranberry Juice did reduce the bacteria load when compared to the beginning of the study when people drank the water. Researchers think that drinking Cranberry Juice does reduce the risk of urinary tract infections (Reid et al., 2001).

Tip: The study showed that drinking 250 cc's (250cc's = 8 and 1/3 ounces) of cranberry juice (*Ocean Spray* Cranberries) three times per day was effective in reducing the number of urinary infections. Another study showed that drinking 300 cc's (300cc's = 10 ounces) of cranberry cocktail per day was also effective. Cranberry Juice Cocktail contains 140 calories per 8 ounces, but a low calorie form is available. Cranberry juice can be diluted with water also for lower calories.

References

- Kontiohari, T., Sunqvist, K., Nuutinen, M., Pokka, T., Koskela, M., & Uhari, M. (2001). Randomized trial of cranberry-lingo juice and Lactobacillus GG drink for the prevention of urinary tract infections in women. *BMJ*, 322, 1571.
- Reid, G., Hsiehl, J., Potter, P., Mighton, J., Lam, D., Warren, D., & Stephenson, J. (2001). Cranberry juice consumption may reduce biofilms on uroepithelial cells: A pilot study on spinal cord injured patients. *Spinal Cord*, 39, 26-30.