

Cranberry Health Benefits

David Christopher, M.H.

We would all be wise if we were to incorporate cranberries into our daily diets instead of just consuming cranberries during the holidays. If this simple addition to our diets were to occur then the national statistics for urinary tract infections (UTIs) would drop exponentially. It is estimated that over 15 million UTIs occur in the United States annually. Cranberries reduce UTIs by preventing bacteria, mainly E. coli, from attaching to the urinary tract walls. Some studies indicate that the bacteria permanently attaches to the poly saccharides in cranberries and is then flushed out with the urine. This shows clearly the old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I do not wish antibiotics (the pound of cure) with their horrible side effects on anyone.

Remember, cranberries are a prevention not a cure. Cranberries can be beneficial if combined with the following herbs: juniper berries, uva-ursi, goldenseal and bayberry. These herbs destroy bacteria, while the cranberries prevent more bacteria from adhering to the bladder wall.

Antioxidants are abundant in cranberries as shown in recent studies which list over two dozen of these phyto-nutrients. These antioxidants help reduce inflammation which is prevalent in many health concerns such as arthritis, allergies, diabetes, cardio vascular and auto immune diseases.

Cranberries have been shown to decrease insulin resistance, lower blood sugar levels, lower fat accumulation and improve most aspects of metabolic syndrome, which is a precursor to diabetes and cardio vascular diseases.



Cranberries are excellent for the entire digestive tract. Cranberries decrease harmful bacteria but promote beneficial bacteria in the mouth and in the intestines. The high fiber content helps cleanse a sluggish bowel.

Cranberries have been shown to dilate the blood vessels, increase blood flow and reduce inflammation making it a perfect food for the heart, especially when combined with hawthorn berries and bell peppers. Eating these foods will help prevent high blood pressure and reduce the risks of stroke.

The only negative health aspect of cranberries is that they are generally consumed with a lot of sugar. All refined sugars should be avoided, especially high fructose corn syrup. There are many healthy alternatives available to replace processed sugars. Artificial sweeteners are much more destructive and should be totally avoided. Be sure to check out the recipe included with the newsletter for a tasty way to consume cranberries. Have a healthy holiday season!

David Christopher is a Master Herbalist and the director of *The School of Natural Healing*. He also co-hosts the popular radio show "A Healthier You" and is a popular international teacher and lecturer.