Cranberries no better at preventing recurrent urinary tract infections than antibiotic prophylaxis

Megan Arroll PhD, FHEA, CPsychol, CSci, AFBPsS; Visiting Research Fellow, Chronic Illness Research Team, University of East London, Stratford Campus, Water Lane, London, E15 4LZ, United Kingdom; Email m.a.arroll@sa.uel.ac.uk

THE PROBLEM: Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are one of the most common complaints seen in primary care; almost half of the world population will experience a UTI during their lives. URIs are, in general, self-limiting but they can reoccur and the symptoms are often distressing for the individual. Antibiotic treatment will resolve the underlying bacterial infection and offer symptomatic relief; however, with the current concern regarding the overuse of antibiotics, effective alternative and preventive treatments would be of benefit. Cranberries contain a substance that stops bacteria from adhering to the bladder wall, which may prevent recurrent UTIs.

CLINICAL BOTTOM LINE: This review demonstrates that cranberries (juice, tablets and capsules) are no better at preventing UTIs than prophylactic antibiotics and only slightly better than no treatment.

Prevention of UTIs with cranberries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success (Risk of 1 or more UTI at follow-up)</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Harms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cranberries vs placebo or no treatment</td>
<td>Non-significant reduction of risk</td>
<td>Cochrane review[^3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranberries vs antibiotic prophylaxis</td>
<td>No significant difference in risk</td>
<td>Cochrane review[^3]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

References


All people residing in New Zealand have access to the Cochrane Library via the Ministry website www.health.govt.nz/cochrane-library.

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String of PEARLS

**Addressing pain**

- Acupuncture effective for tension-type headache
- No evidence for effectiveness of antivirals in preventing postherpetic neuralgia
- Limited evidence for benefit of amitriptyline for neuropathic pain and fibromyalgia in adults
- Topical capsaicin may be of benefit for chronic neuropathic pain
- Psychological therapies can be of benefit for chronic pain in adults
- Caffeine effective as an analgesic adjuvant
- Psychological interventions may be effective for non-cardiac chest pain

**DISCLAIMER:** PEARLS are for educational use only and are not meant to guide clinical activity, nor are they a clinical guideline.