

to the (cran-)max

The concentrated power of cranberries beats UTIs naturally

Tammy, now 43, had struggled with frequent urinary tract infections (UTIs) since her teenage years, and they got worse while she was pregnant. "It's something I've had my whole life, and it's not something doctors can do anything about," she says. Even antibiotics weren't effective during her last pregnancy. With the approval of her OB/GYN, Tammy tried Cran-Max—and it worked.

Previously, no amount of cranberry juice or supplements had kept the infections at bay. At the suggestion of her doctor, Tammy kept taking 500 mg of Cran-Max daily until, eventually, she no longer needed it all the time. Now, if she feels a urinary tract infection developing, she takes one Cran-Max pill and it quickly goes away. "It's been a godsend for me," she says; "People need to know that there's something they can do; it's natural; and it works."

HOW IT WORKS

Cranberry has a long history of use as a remedy for UTIs, and Cran-Max is a proprietary cranberry concentrate that has been found particularly effective. Anecdotal evidence shows that it may also help prevent UTIs when taken at the first sign of symptoms.

UTIs occur when *E. coli* bacteria attach themselves to cell walls in the bladder. "Cran-Max stops bacteria from adhering," says Sherry Torkos, BSc, Phm, author of *The Canadian Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine*. *E. coli* are shaped like rods, with a lot of surface area that

adheres to the interior walls of the bladder. Proanthocyanidins, substances naturally present in cranberries, change the shape of the *E. coli* into spheres, so there's less surface area for attachment. Cranberry doesn't actually kill the bacteria, but if *E. coli* can't stick to the bladder, they simply get eliminated without causing any harm. "It takes time to get enough in your system," says Torkos. It's realistic to expect preventive benefits to kick in within the first week.

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

Studies that followed a total of more than 600 women found that when taken daily, Cran-Max reduces UTIs almost as effectively as a low-dose antibiotic, without the side effects. And because cranberry doesn't kill them, bacteria can't become resistant to it.

Another side effect of antibiotics is that they destroy probiotics, beneficial bacteria that are essential for healthy digestion. A lack of probiotics predisposes women to yeast infections.

Like Cran-Max, cranberry juice can

help prevent UTIs, but many women can't tolerate drinking it on a daily basis. Some studies have compared costs and found that when used daily, cranberry juice costs nearly three times as much as Cran-Max.

HOW TO USE CRAN-MAX

- For prevention of UTIs: Take 500 mg once daily. The same dose is safe for adults and children.
- After sexual intercourse: If you don't take Cran-Max regularly, take 500–1,000 mg within 6 hours of sexual intercourse.
- To stop a UTI: Cran-Max may stop a UTI infection if you take 1,000 mg at the first signs. But once a UTI develops, it can progress into a kidney infection if not treated with antibiotics, and Cran-Max is not a substitute for medical treatment. If you do take an antibiotic, take a probiotic supplement during treatment (at a different time of day) and for at least two weeks after finishing the antibiotic prescription.



Natrol Cranberry Fast Dissolve is a fast way to take your Cran-max—two tablets deliver 250 mg of quick-dissolve, highly absorbable cranberry constituents.



Vibrant Health Cran-Max gives you the benefits of whole cranberries without the sugar and calories of juice, packing 500 mg Cran-Max per capsule.



Wakunaga Kyo-Dophilus Probiotics Plus Cranberry Extract combines Cran-Max with three strains of probiotics clinically shown to benefit urinary tract health.

Better Nutrition contributing editor, **Vera Tweed** has been writing about nutrition, fitness, and healthy living since 1997. She specializes in covering research and expert knowledge that empowers people to lead better lives.