Cranberries May Help Fight UTIs Naturally, But Not in Juice Form

February 18, 2016

Ever rush out to buy a bottle of cranberry juice when you get a urinary tract infection? Well, new research published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology suggests that the well-known remedy may be no more than a panacea for soothing the pain, unless you pop the tart little berry in supplement form, Medical News Today reports.

For the study, researchers recruited 160 patients who were undergoing gynecological surgery between 2011 and 2013. (According to statistics, 10 to 64 percent of women develop a UTI after such surgery). As treatment, half of the patients received two cranberry capsules twice each day the equivant of two 8-ounce servings of cranberry juice, for six weeks after surgery. The others took a placebo.

Researchers found that the cranberry capsules reduced the risk of UTIs by 50 percent. In the cranberry treatment group, 19 percent of patients developed an infection, compared with 38 percent in the placebo group.

But remember, the power to scuttle a UTI is contained in the cherry-red supplement, not the juice. “Cranberry juice, especially the juice concentrates you find at the grocery store, will not treat a UTI or bladder infection,” wrote study author Timothy Boone, PhD, vice dean of the Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine in Houston. “It can offer more hydration and possibly wash bacteria from your body more effectively, but the active ingredient in cranberry is long gone by the time it reaches your bladder.”

If you don’t have access to ultra-concentrated cranberry pills, a persistent UTI can be treated with antibiotics, or, as an alternative, researchers proposed using probiotics or “good” bacteria found in the digestive tract. Probiotics can be found in a multitude of foods, including fermented vegetables (like sauerkraut) and yogurt.

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