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Does cranberry juice help with pooping

Recent changes to the FDA guidelines for nutrition labels have brought to light some things that—let's be honest—you already knew. Sugary breakfast cereal isn't a health food (even if it is whole-grain), and soda is, well, soda. It's a challenging time for those of us dedicated to deluding ourselves about the nutritional value of our food choices, and now our vodka cranberries are taking a hit, too.According to this new analysis by Vox, drinking cranberry juice may not be an effective way to prevent urinary tract infections after all. The analysis specifically looks at a study published in the June issue of The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition on the effects of drinking cranberry juice on the prevalence of UTIs. On its surface, the study looks pretty impressive—a randomized, double-blind trial involving nearly 400 women from around the U.S. and using a placebo as a control. The researchers concluded that the consumption of cranberry juice did indeed reduce the number of UTIs in the sample group by nearly 40 percent, which the juice brand Ocean Spray then used as proof of the health benefits of its product.The problem, as Vox points out, is that the study was not only funded by Ocean Spray (always a red flag) and carried out by a lot of Ocean Spray's own scientists but also actually skewed the data in the brand's favor by defining a UTI as UTI-like symptoms rather than bacterial results proving that the women in question had a genuine infection. "They made [cranberry juice] appear much more effective by using a clinical definition—symptoms—which is rubbery at best," Jonathan Craig, a clinical epidemiology professor at the University of Sydney, told Vox. "By definition, a UTI means you have an infection in the urinary tract. How can you have a UTI without the 'I'?"Vox also points out that even if the study were 100 percent legit, the results are pretty underwhelming in practical terms: The findings suggest that drinking cranberry juice daily could prevent just one symptomatic UTI (one not confirmed by the presence of bacteria) over the course of three years.While this may be sad-trombone-worthy news for cranberry-juice drinkers, you don't have to lose complete faith in the abilities of everybody's favorite Thanksgiving side-dish fruit. There is still evidence that cranberries contain ingredients that can help fight off UTIs; there's just not enough of those ingredients in cranberry juice to do much good. Instead, opt for cranberry supplements, which contain a much higher proportion of the beneficial components of the fruit. And maybe wash them down with a vodka cranberry, because hey, they're still delicious.Buzzfeed: Eye-Opening Facts About Vaginas Health benefits are a core of Ocean Spray's marketing, but a new study has some questioning the validity of the research the company funded.Share on PinterestUrinary tract infections (UTIs) are one of the most common bacterial infections in women and children.Painful and avoidable, they also require antibiotics, which doesn't necessarily prevent further infections. The unnecessary use of antibiotics has led to the rise of drug-resistant bacteria, a major problem globally. Could cranberry juice, a commonly believed aid in UTIs, actually help reduce the use of antibiotics?Ocean Spray, the largest cranberry producer in the world, would like you to think so.The health benefits of cranberry juice are, after all, a large focus of their marketing strategy. Last week, Ocean Spray released the results of a study, published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, which suggests drinking an 8-ounce glass of cranberry juice every day could help reduce the likelihood of a UTI by 40 percent, at least in women over 40 who frequently have the infection. Calling the "landmark" study the largest clinical trial of its kind, the press release states cranberry juice "may be a useful strategy to decrease worldwide use of antibiotics" by preventing the need for the drugs.So how do their claims match up to the evidence?"That's a bit of a stretch," Dr. Aaron Glatt, chair of the Department of Medicine and Hospital Epidemiologist at South Nassau Communities Hospital in New York, told Healthline. "The landmark isn't a landmark."Read more: Why is nutrition advice so confusing? »For the study, women with a median age of 40 were assigned to two groups. One group drank 8 ounces of an Ocean Spray cranberry cocktail per day, which contained 27 percent actual cranberry juice. The group other received a placebo. Ocean Spray financially supported the study, including providing the cranberry cocktail. Two of its employees, Kerrie L. Kaspar and Christina Khoo, head of research sciences, were involved in all aspects of the research. Ocean Spray representatives said the study was conducted by an independent research company, registered with clinicaltrials.gov, and published in a peer-reviewed journal. The research also followed necessary protocols, including board and ethics committee approval. Kalpana Gupta, an associate professor of infectious diseases at Boston University, was the only researcher on the study who reported no conflicts of interest. She's also been researching infectious disease for 20 years, including studying cranberries for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).She called the study "beautifully done" because of its size, compliance to treatment, and follow-up. There were 373 women in the final study. All had experienced a recent UTI. During the study period, researchers diagnosed 39 UTIs in people who drank cranberry juice. In the placebo group, there were 67 UTIs. Overall, researchers concluded, there was a 40 percent reduction in UTI symptoms in women who drank the cranberry cocktail.Read more: What should be considered 'healthy' on food labels? »There are, however, points of concern.The study examined a woman's symptoms, not laboratory-confirmed bacterial infections. Secondly, they counted all of the UTIs among the subjects and piled them together, not addressing the individual infection rates. Gupta said symptoms were measured because that's what's used in the clinical setting. "Symptoms of a UTI are why people go see their doctors," she told Healthline. "These women with recurring UTIs will do anything to prevent them."Despite this and Ocean Spray's involvement, Gupta says she's confident in the findings and that they're in line with other research. While Gupta says she wasn't paid for her role in the study, she now speaks on the issue and Ocean Spray compensates her for her travel expenses.In 2012, Gupta co-authored research in the journal Mayo Clinic Proceedings that found cranberry juice didn't significantly reduce UTIs risk in women. Ocean Spray didn't fund that research. When it comes to studying UTI risk, Glatt says other factors could have been at play and should have been controlled for, such as a woman's sexual activity and contraception use, which can increase her likelihood of a UTI. "These are well-known factors that need to be controlled for," Glatt said.Some research has shown that cranberries possess molecules that can interfere with how bacteria affix themselves inside the urinary tract. Those results, however, are at the type of concentrations for cranberries typically found in concentrated pills. Even then research on cranberry's protective effects is limited. "The amount you would have to drink is much, much larger" than what subjects drank in the current study, Glatt said. Read more: Reducing sugar in sodas would greatly reduce obesity and diabetes »Drinking more cranberry cocktail could come with some unintended consequences.Ocean Spray's Cranberry Juice Cocktail contains 28 grams of sugar per 8-ounce serving, which is higher than some sodas. That's 7 teaspoons of sugar, one more than the daily recommended maximum for women. While she didn't say what Ocean Spray product was tested, Gupta did say it was a low-calorie version. "We use something people can go out and get," she said. "It empowers many people to go out and get it."But, at least according to a urologist at Texas A&M University, it may not do any real good. "Cranberry juice, especially the juice concentrates you find at the grocery store, will not treat a UTI or bladder infection," Dr. Timothy Boone, Ph.D., told the school's Vital Record in February. "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."A study published in Clinical Infectious Diseases in 2011 tested ingesting 16 ounces of 27 percent cranberry juice per day. The study was based on results collected from 319 college women with UTI symptoms. Researchers concluded that overall the juice didn't help protect a second infection within six months. Read more: Why Coca Cola's obesity research funding crossed the line »Another of Glatt's concerns is where the recent Ocean Spray study was published.He points out it was in a nutrition journal, not one focusing on infectious diseases. "They had plenty of time to submit it to other journals," he said. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition (AJCN) has a history of publishing industry-funded research. Its board's conflict-of-interest disclosures are numerous. While none disclose ties to Ocean Spray, they do extend to other major sugary drink manufacturers, including Ocean Spray's distributor, Pepsi Co. Michele Simon, who writes at EatDrinkPolitics.com, has been critical of the American Society of Nutrition, the publisher of the AJCN, because of its close affiliation with major food manufacturers. "I would just say it's part of an industry pattern of funding research that — surprise! — benefits their bottom line," Simon commented to Healthline about the Ocean Spray study.Khoo, however, says Ocean Spray has always upheld the highest standards in its research. "As the cranberry experts, we provided information on the cranberry components in the products and information regarding the most recent research on the mechanism of action of these cranberry components," she told Healthline. "We were not involved in the execution of this trial and had no contact with the clinics running the trial. We were not involved in the collection, or statistical analysis of the data and the preparation of the results of this study."Dr. Dennis M Bier, editor-in-chief of the AJCN, did not respond to a request for comment. One study published in the journal Clinical Infectious Diseases, compared drinking up to 10 ounces of Ocean Spray's Cranberry Classic per day with drinking the same amout of a placebo. Of the 255 children who completed the trial — all who'd recently experienced a UTI — 16 percent had another UTI within a year, compared with 22 percent who received the placebo. While a small improvement, the hardest part, researchers noted, was getting the kids to drink the juice, a common complaint of people in cranberry juice studies.Research conducted by Ocean Spray researchers, however, often deliver more conclusive results, such as the case with a study published in April 2015, which concluded cranberry concentrate or juices helps prevent bacteria from adhering to the urinary tract.But a review of studies regarding cranberries and UTIs performed in 2012 found "Cranberry juice does not appear to have a significant benefit in preventing UTIs and may be unacceptable to consume in the long term."So how can the same evidence lead to conflicting advice?That was the question an Ocean Spray-funded review asked in May in the journal Advances in Nutrition, another publication of the American Society for Nutrition. Overall, they found good reason for more research into cranberries as a preventative measure against recurring UTIs in women. Read more: Sugar industry influenced research on tooth decay »Industry funded research is common in our food chain. Sometimes the results of this research are overstated to the consumer, especially when it comes to sugary drinks. Last month, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the case of Pom Wonderful. The Federal Trade Commission had chastised the company for overstating health claims in advertisements. In 2009, Pom unsuccessfully sued Ocean Spray for making a cranberry-pomegranate drink that only contained 2 percent pomegranate juice and that piggybacked off Pom's success. These cases, however, call into question the validity of research as well as the health claims associated with them. Still, many believe there could be good reason to suggest cranberries could have legitimate health benefits related to UTIs. Amesh A. Adalja, an infectious disease physician at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, says he doesn't automatically discount industry-funded research, but it is something to keep in mind when evaluating studies.As to the effectiveness of cranberry juice for UTI treatments, he says no studies have "really provided consistent or impressive results." "Because cranberry juice is a cheap and easy intervention, it isn't something I discourage people from drinking if they are prone to UTIs," Adalja told Healthline. "This study provides more evidence that there may be an effect present. However, future studies looking at, for example, biomarkers in the urine of cranberry juice drinking women would be useful in fully determining if a causal effect from cranberry juice is actually present."A survey of Healthline readers revealed that a majority of people seem to believe cranberry juice can help with a urinary tract infection.About 60 percent who answered the unscientific online poll the past few days said they have had a UTI in the past. Half said their doctor had recommended drinking cranberry juice to treat or prevent the infection.About 72 percent said they have used cranberry juice to help with a UTI. Of the women who answered, 75 percent said they had used cranberry juice. Of the men, nearly 60 percent said they had.About 68 percent said they believed cranberry juice can treat or prevent UTIs. Of the women who answered, 72 said they believed the juice can help. About 54 percent of men said they did.In all, 600 Healthline readers responded to the survey. You may have heard that drinking cranberry juice can help with a urinary tract infection (UTI), but that's not the only benefit.Cranberries are packed with nutrients to help your body ward off infections and boost overall health. In fact, throughout history, they've been used to treat:urinary issues upset stomach liver problemsCranberries grow in marshes and are often water-harvested. When the berries are ripe and ready to pick, they float in the water. Being on the water's surface exposes them to more sunlight. This may increase their nutritional value.Like most fruits, you get the highest level of nutrition when you eat cranberries whole. But the juice is still chock-full of benefits.Read on to find out how drinking cranberry juice can benefit your health.Unsweetened, pure cranberry juice is a good source of both vitamin C and vitamin E. It's also a decent source of several other vitamins and minerals, including:vitamin C: 26% of the daily value (DV)vitamin E: 20% of the DVcopper: 15% of the DVvitamin K1: 11% of the DVvitamin B6: 8% of the DV Vitamin C and E are strong antioxidants that play an important role in overall health.Cranberries contain proanthocyanidins, a class of compounds commonly found in plants. It's believed that these compounds can help prevent UTIs by stopping bacteria from attaching to the lining of the urinary tract. If bacteria can't grow and spread, an infection is unable to develop.Unfortunately, research on cranberry juice has been mixed. Some studies show cranberry juice to be effective in reducing the risk of UTIs, while others have found that it isn't an effective treatment.More research is still needed to determine the exact benefits.Cranberries also contain other phytonutrients with anti-inflammatory properties. Inflammation plays a role in damaging blood vessels over time, including the arteries. The damaged arteries then attract plaque, causing atherosclerosis.Phytonutrients in cranberries could help guard against inflammation, delaying the process and offering protection against heart disease.A 2019 study in men who are overweight and have obesity showed that the daily intake of a high-polyphenol cranberry beverage for 8 weeks improved several risk factors for heart disease.There's also some evidence that cranberry juice can help to prevent dental plaque that builds up on teeth and causes gum disease.Like other fruits and berries, cranberries contain powerful phytochemicals that act as antioxidants, including:vitamin C vitamin E quercetinAntioxidants help to protect your body from cell damage due to free radicals. Free radicals contribute to the aging process and may also be risk factors for developing chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease.Research published in the Journal of Nutrition found that cranberries might have a role in preventing cancer through dietary changes.While a diet rich in various whole fruit, berries, and vegetables is associated with a reduced risk of cancer, there's no conclusive evidence that cranberries or cranberry juice protects against cancer on its own.The same compounds that help protect the heart also improve your digestive system function.According to a 2016 study published in the Journal of Research in Pharmacy Practice, they can prevent the bacteria Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) from growing and multiplying in the stomach lining.This is important because when H. pylori are allowed to grow out of control, stomach ulcers may form.Studies in animals suggest the antioxidants and other anti-inflammatory substances in cranberries may provide protection against colon cancer, too. However, it's unlikely that cranberry juice has the same effects.When you're looking for healthy cranberry juice, it's important not to fall for labeling traps. There's a big difference between cranberry juice cocktail (or cranberry drink) and real cranberry juice.Juice cocktails contain added sugars like high fructose corn syrup, which isn't good for you. These cocktails are often made with only a small amount of actual cranberry juice.Look for labels that say "made with 100 percent real juice" or that list other natural sweeteners like apple or grape juice.Cranberry juice can be a healthy part of your diet and even help protect against certain health issues. But it's not a substitute for treating a medical condition. If you think you have a UTI, go see your doctor.Normal serving sizes of cranberry juice are safe and healthy, but overdoing it could cause side effects like:upset stomach diarrheaspikes in blood sugarCranberry juice can also cause issues for people taking blood-thinning medications. Talk to your doctor about whether or not you should limit or avoid cranberry juice while taking your medication.

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