

Review of current evidence: Cranberry supplementation as possible UTI prevention in paediatric spinal cord injured patients

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Context: Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) are the leading cause of morbidity in children, and in patients with spinal cord injuries. While traditionally cranberry has been used to reduce UTIs, the evidence of its effectiveness is conflicting, especially in children with neurogenic bladders from spinal cord injuries. As such, family physicians are unable to offer clear recommendations on cranberry use for this population group.

Objective: To evaluate the existing data regarding the use of cranberry supplements as UTI prophylaxis in paediatric spinal cord injured patients with neurogenic bladders.

Design: Three literature searches of Medline databases with no date limits were conducted using combinations of the following terms: “pediatrics”, “urinary tract infections”, “cranberry juice”, and “spinal cord injuries”.

Results: No studies to date on cranberry as UTI prophylaxis in paediatric spinal cord injured patients. Two systematic reviews were identified with one focused on cranberry supplements as UTI prophylaxis in the spinal cord injured, and the other focused on its use in children. Neither study found good supporting evidence for cranberry as UTI prophylaxis in patients, children or adult, with neurogenic bladders. However, there is evidence to support cranberry use for UTI prevention in healthy children without neurogenic bladders.

Conclusions: Extrapolating from the limited evidence to support cranberry use for UTI prevention in patients with neurogenic bladders, regardless of age, cranberry supplements may not be effective as UTI prophylaxis in paediatric spinal cord injured patients. More rigorous clinical research is needed to confirm this.

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