



Cranberries

A Review of Potential Health Benefits



- Cranberries contain two main types of antioxidants: **polyphenols** and **ascorbic acid**.
- Polyphenols are the color compounds in fruits including the red to blue colored **anthocyanins**, **flavanols**, and **ellagic acid and its derivatives**, the **ellagitanins**.
- The polyphenolic composition of berries varies with the species, variety, degree of ripeness and type of processing.

Reported Health Benefits of Cranberries

- Historically, cranberry fruits and leaves were used for a variety of conditions, such as wounds, urinary disorders, diarrhea, diabetes, stomach ailments and liver problems.
- Recently, cranberry products have been used in the prevention and treatment of **urinary tract infections** and ***Helicobacter pylori*** infections (that can lead to stomach ulcers or even gastric cancer).
- Cranberries have also been reported to have antioxidant properties useful in the prevention of **heart disease** and **cancer**.

Cranberries have the highest phenolic compound content of eleven common fruits. Cranberry polyphenols can prevent cancer cell growth and proliferation. They are anti-oxidants and help in heart disease prevention. Cranberry polyphenols change the enzymatic activity in the cell and reduce inflammation.

Why Do We Need Antioxidants?

In normal metabolism, the levels of oxidants and antioxidants in humans are maintained in balance. Certain conditions can cause an overproduction of oxidants, leading to an excessive level of oxidants which can then damage cellular lipids, DNA, and proteins. Oxidative damage is cancer-inducing, and may be prevented or limited by dietary antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables. Recent studies show that the phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables are the major bioactive compounds with human health benefits.

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