



## Cranberry juice still better than cranberry pills



Attempts to create pills that capture the scientifically acknowledged health benefits of cranberry juice have met with mixed results. But the clear finding is that drinking the juice in its natural form is still the best way of harnessing the little berry's goodness.

Scientists from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) tested a group of flavonoids found in cranberries called proanthocyanidins (PACs), which had been thought to be the active element in cranberry juice that fights infection, particularly in the urinary tract. When extracted and trialled, however, cranberry juice was found to be much more effective at preventing the precursor to infection (biofilms) than the PACs extracts.

Professor Terri Comesano, senior study author and professor of chemical engineering at WPI, said, 'What we have shown is that cranberry juice's ability to prevent biofilms is more complex than we may have originally thought. For a while, the field focused on these PACs, but the data shows that they aren't the silver bullet.'

The scientists incubated two strains of *E. coli* bacteria, the main cause of urinary tract infections, in two different cranberry juice mixtures. They did the same with bacteria and PACs, rather than juice. The PACs displayed a limited ability to reduce biofilm formation, whereas the juice completely prevented biofilm formation.

The authors wrote, 'Cranberries have been recognised for their health benefits for a number of years, especially in the prevention of UTIs. While the mechanisms of action of cranberry products on bacterial adhesion and biofilm formation are not fully understood...this study shows that cranberry juice is better at inhibiting biofilm formation than isolated A-type cranberry flavonoids and PACs, although the reasons for this are not yet clear.'

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