

Cranberry

Cranberry is a small red berry obtained from *Vaccinium macrocarpon*, a plant native to North America. It has long been used both as a food and as a traditional remedy, particularly for urinary tract health. Today, cranberry products are widely marketed as functional foods and dietary supplements.

Key facts

- **Scientific name:** *Vaccinium macrocarpon*
- **Common names:** Cranberry, American cranberry
- **Family:** Ericaceae
- **Active compounds:** Proanthocyanidins, flavonoids, vitamin C
- **Typical forms:** Juice, capsules, extracts, dried berries

Botanical characteristics

Cranberry is a low-growing evergreen shrub that produces tart red berries. It thrives in acidic bog environments and is cultivated extensively in North America. The berries are harvested for use in foods, beverages, and supplements.

Traditional and modern uses

Traditionally, cranberry has been used to support urinary tract health and general wellness. In modern nutrition and herbal medicine, cranberry is most commonly associated with urinary tract infection prevention and antioxidant support.

Mechanism and research

Research suggests that cranberry proanthocyanidins may help reduce bacterial adhesion to the urinary tract lining, particularly with certain strains of *Escherichia coli*. Studies on cranberry products have shown mixed but promising results regarding recurrent urinary tract infection prevention.

Safety and regulation

Cranberry is generally considered safe when consumed as food or dietary supplements. Excessive intake may cause gastrointestinal discomfort in some individuals. Cranberry products may also interact with anticoagulant medications such as warfarin in sensitive patients.

Culinary and supplement context

Cranberries are widely consumed as juices, sauces, dried fruits, and dietary supplements. Their tart flavor and antioxidant profile have contributed to their popularity in both culinary and wellness markets worldwide.