



Cranberries have long reserved a space next to our Thanksgiving turkeys. They're even recommended by doctors to help prevent urinary tract infections. Now, researchers at the University of Rochester Medical Center have identified specific properties of the cranberry that could prevent cavities.

Over the past few years, studies have shown that the same elements in cranberries that block bacteria from sticking to the bladder may have the same effect on your teeth. The most popular cavity-causing bacteria—*Streptococcus mutans*—can't stick to the tooth surface when it goes up against the tart little berries. According to a recent study out of Rochester, two compounds in cranberries have been identified as being mainly responsible for this "Teflon" effect, specifically flavanoids (or antioxidants) known as quercetin and myricetin.

Cranberries not only prevent bacteria from sticking to your teeth in the first place, but they also may help stop the building process of plaque. Bacteria in the mouth use enzymes to build up plaque on the teeth, but cranberries help inhibit these enzymes from doing their destructive job.

Though researchers are beginning to successfully identify the decay-fighting compounds in cranberries, they warn against running immediately to your local juice aisle. Most juices on your grocer's shelves contain sugar that causes cavities, countering the positive properties of the cranberry. Natural acidity found in cranberries can also increase your risk for tooth decay.

But, as more of the tooth-healthy elements of the cranberry are singled out, don't be surprised if you someday see the red berry in your toothpaste or mouth rinse!

Check out the University of Rochester Medical Center at www.urmc.rochester.edu for more up-to-date research and information.

For information on the TRICARE Dental Program, or to find more "Dental Health 101" tips, visit us online at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com.

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