

From our friends at "Back to Herbs"



eFlash



Uva Ursi

The generic name, derived from the Greek, and the Latin specific name, uva ursi, mean the same: the Bear's grape, and may have been given to the plant, either from the notion that bears eat the fruit with relish, or from its very rough, unpleasant flavor, which might have been considered only fit for bears.

Native Americans used uva ursi as a remedy for urinary tract infections. In fact, until the discovery of sulfa drugs and antibiotics, uva ursi was a common treatment for such bladder and related infections. Uva ursi has a history of medicinal use dating back to the 2nd century. It has been widely used as a diuretic, astringent, and antiseptic. Folk medicine around the world has recommended uva ursi for nephritis, kidney stones, and chronic cystitis. The herb has also been used as a general tonic for weakened kidneys, liver or pancreas.



Uva ursi may be of great value in diseases of the bladder and kidneys, strengthening and imparting tone to the urinary passages. The diuretic action is due to the glucoside arbutin, which is largely absorbed, unchanged and is excreted by the kidneys. During its excretion, arbutin exercises an antiseptic effect on the urinary mucous membrane. Therefore, it is used in inflammatory diseases of the urinary tract, urethritis, cystitis, etc.

Infections of the urinary tract are the second most common type of infection in the body. Urinary tract infections (UTIs) account for about 8.3 million doctor visits each year. Women are especially prone to UTIs. One woman in five develops a UTI during her lifetime. UTIs in men are not as common as in women but can be very serious when they do occur.

The urinary system consists of the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra. The key elements in the system are the kidneys, a pair of purplish-brown organs located below the ribs toward the middle of the back. The kidneys remove excess liquid and wastes from the blood in the form of urine, keep a stable balance of salts and other substances in the blood, and produce a hormone that aids the formation of red blood cells. Narrow tubes called ureters carry urine from the kidneys to the bladder. Urine is stored in the bladder and emptied through the urethra.

Normally, urine is sterile. It is usually free of bacteria, viruses, and fungi but does contain fluids, salts, and waste products. An infection occurs when tiny organisms, usually bacteria from the digestive tract, cling to the opening of the urethra and begin to multiply. The urethra is the tube that carries urine from the bladder to outside the body. Most

infections arise from one type of bacteria, *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), which normally lives in the colon.

In many cases, bacteria first travel to the urethra. When bacteria multiply, an infection can occur. An infection limited to the urethra is called urethritis. If bacteria move to the bladder and multiply, a bladder infection called cystitis, results. If the infection is not treated promptly, bacteria may then travel further up the ureters to multiply and infect the kidneys. A kidney infection is called pyelonephritis.

Acute pyelonephritis is a potentially organ- and/or life-threatening infection that characteristically causes some scarring of the kidney with each infection and may lead to significant damage to the kidney, kidney failure, abscess formation, sepsis, or sepsis syndrome/shock/multiorgan system failure. More than 250,000 cases occur in the United States each year, and approximately 200,000 patients require hospitalization.

Uva ursi contains chemicals, primarily hydroquinone and hydroquinone derivatives, that make it potentially useful for urinary conditions. The hydroquinone derivative, arbutin, is the chief active compound in *uva ursi*. It is absorbed in the stomach and converted into a substance with antimicrobial, astringent, and disinfectant properties.

During urination, as it passes out of the body, it acts on the mucus membranes of the urinary tract to soothe irritation, reduce inflammation, and fight infection. Interestingly, arbutin taken alone is not as effective as the whole *uva ursi* plant in controlling urinary tract infections. That's because intestinal bacteria can break down arbutin, but they are less likely to do so in the presence of other *uva ursi* compounds.

Commission E of the German Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices has approved *uva ursi* for treating inflammation of the lower urinary tract, which is the German governmental agency that evaluates the safety and effectiveness of herbal products. An astringent shrinks and tightens the top layers of mucous membranes, thereby reducing secretions, relieving irritation, and improving tissue firmness.

Astringent tannins found in this herb are binding and help relieve diarrhea. It is also effective for the treatment of kidney stones, as it acts on these by softening them and has muscle relaxant properties, which may be beneficial in patients with this disorder. Other illnesses for which it has been used include Bright's disease, dysentery, nephritis, gonorrhea and syphilis, excessive menstruation, stimulation of the spleen, liver and pancreas, hemorrhoids, menopause, and diabetes. This herb helps prevent postpartum infection. The herb neutralizes acidity in the urine, increasing urine flow, therefore reducing bloating and water retention, making it beneficial for weight loss. *Uva ursi*'s astringent properties may also assist in the treatment of some bed wetting problems.

Uva ursi is effective at the first sign of infection and is most effective when a person's urine is alkaline since acid destroys its antibacterial effect. Do not use in conjunction with citrus or cranberry products.

You may have an infection if you have any of these symptoms:

- You feel pain or burning when you urinate.
- You feel like you have to urinate often, but not much urine comes out when you do.
- Your belly feels tender or heavy.
- Your urine is cloudy or smells bad.
- You have pain on one side of your back under your ribs. This is where your kidneys are.
- You have fever and chills.

- You have nausea and vomiting.

Call your doctor right away if you think you have an infection and:

- You have a fever, nausea and vomiting, or pain in one side of your back under your ribs.
- You have diabetes, kidney problems, or a weak immune system.
- You are older than 65.
- You are pregnant.



Be sure to try NSP's Uva Ursi (100 caps) , Uva Ursi (100 caps) or Urinary Maintenance (120 caps).

References:

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Yours in Good Health!

Sincerely,

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