

## Holiday Treats, Holiday Remedies



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It's that time of the year again, when we all look forward to some well-earned time off to spend with family, friends and loved ones, or maybe to some peace and quiet on our own. A time where we look forward to the coming year and hope our credit card company has accidentally erased our massive bill.

Some of our holiday traditions can be beneficial for our health. Here are some healing properties that you may not have heard about common holiday traditions.

#### The Christmas tree

Did you know that the Christmas tree, usually balsam fir or spruce, has antiseptic properties? Pine bark, another tree in the evergreen family, contains a component called pycnogenol which has medical properties. A study was conducted on 40 patients with varicose veins and chronic venous insufficiency (poor blood flow in the veins). After 60 days of treatment with pycnogenol, the patients reported complete disappearance of leg swelling, pain and a reduction in leg heaviness. The researchers concluded that pycnogenol was an effective treatment for varicose veins and chronic venous insufficiency.

#### Mistletoe

In addition to providing a convenient excuse to smooch, mistletoe has also been shown to have some beneficial effects in the treatment of cancer. Some preliminary clinical research indicates that European mistletoe extracts may improve survival in patients with solid tumors of the breast, colon and stomach. Before taking mistletoe, please consult a licensed health care practitioner as mistletoe treatments should only be conducted under medical supervision.

#### Cranberries

These bitter red berries are not only good for a sauce on turkey, but have been shown to be beneficial in treating bladder and urinary disorders. In a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 153 elderly women received 300 ml per day of cranberry juice for one month. After 1 month, cranberry juice was shown to reduce the frequency of urinary tract infections (UTI) in elderly women. Another study demonstrated a preventative effect of cranberry juice on UTIs for women of different ages. When taking cranberry juice, organic unsweetened cranberry juice is best for an optimal treatment effect. If the taste is too bitter for you, try diluting it or using stevia as a sweetener.

#### Peppermint

Peppermint candy canes, peppermint chocolates and peppermint liquor—it's easy to see that peppermint is a popular flavor of the holidays. Did you know that peppermint oil is used to treat a number of gastrointestinal illnesses? In a study published in the Journal of Gastroenterology, 110 patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) received capsules (enteric-coated) of peppermint oil. After one month, patients reported an improvement in abdominal pain (79%), less bloating (83%), reduced stool frequency (73%), less stomach rumbling (73%) and less flatulence (79%). The researchers concluded that enteric-coated peppermint oil was an effective and well-tolerated treatment for IBS. Peppermint has also been shown to relieve indigestion, bloating and gastrointestinal spasms.

Peppermint tea is a common beverage after a meal in many countries around the world—after that big holiday meal, unbuckle your belt and sip some to help with digestion