

ENCOURAGE WATER CONSUMPTION, BUT NEVER MIND THE CRANBERRY JUICE

The most important step in preventing urinary tract infections is to treat the underlying disease, says Andrea N. Johnston, DVM, DACVIM, at Cornell. Among other measures:

- ◆ Encourage drinking. Water can help flush infection-causing bacteria from the cat's urinary tract. Make sure fresh water is available at all times. Place water in several rooms of your home to give the cat easily accessible drinking opportunities.
- ◆ Boost bathroom breaks. Have more than one litter box and place them in separate rooms to encourage more frequent elimination.
- ◆ Clean the perineum, the area between the anus and the geni-

talia. Keep it free of bacteria if this region is matted or unkempt by gently using baby wipes.

Some women have found cranberry juice to be helpful in preventing UTIs, and two studies, published in the *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine*, indicate that cranberry extract may be helpful in treating UTIs in dogs. However, Dr. Johnston urges caution. "Unfortunately, there is no evidence-based data on the safety or efficacy of alternative therapeutic agents for the treatment of feline or canine UTIs," she says. "Cranberry extract has not been evaluated in canine or feline clinical trials as a prevention or cure for urinary tract infections and remains of uncertain benefit."