

# Interstitial Cystitis / Bladder Pain syndrome

## How can I keep control?

IC can easily take over your life so it is good to be able to manage the condition and take back some semblance of control. Like any healthy diet, reasonable amounts of fruit and vegetables are important. Information from several studies have shown that certain types of foods and drinks can increase the pain from this condition. These include alcohol, carbonated drinks, coffee, tea and other drinks containing caffeine, those foods with a high acid content (including fruit juices), spicy food, aged cheese, yoghurt and pickles. The principle behind this is that by reducing the acidic levels of your urine, the irritation in the bladder is less. Other things known to irritate and therefore potentially flare up the condition are artificial sweeteners, sugar and aspirin.

If you feel you would like more information on IC and Bladder Pain Syndrome, or would like to find out about support groups in your local area, please contact **Bladder Health UK** on **0121 702 0820**. They can also be found on the internet at [www.bladderhealthuk.org](http://www.bladderhealthuk.org)



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## What is interstitial cystitis (IC) / bladder pain syndrome (BPS)

Interstitial Cystitis (IC) is one of a number of chronic pelvic pain disorders that fall under the term bladder pain syndrome (BPS). It is characterised by recurring discomfort or chronic pain in the bladder and surrounding pelvic region and usually results in a significant negative impact on your Quality of Life because of the frequent need to urinate.

### What are the causes?

Often misdiagnosed, the cause of IC remains unknown. Unlike more common forms of cystitis, IC is not caused by bacterial infection and therefore does not respond to antibiotic treatment.

### What are the symptoms?

The three classic symptoms associated with IC are Pain, Urgency and Frequency of Urination. While all three are common and present in the vast majority of cases, it is not impossible to only present with two out of the three.

**Pain:** Pain associated with IC can be felt in the lower abdomen, pelvis, vagina and urethral tube (the tube which connects the bladder to the outside of the body) and is often associated with sexual intercourse. Male IC patients may also experience testicular pain and painful ejaculation.

**Urgency:** The sense of constantly needing to urinate immediately can also be accompanied by discomfort due to sensations of pressure and pain.

**Frequency:** In severe cases, day and or night-time frequency of urination for IC patients can be up to 50 times per day. An increase in frequency of urination can be the only presenting symptom in the early stages of the condition.

## What can be done about it?

As the exact cause of IC is unknown, there is no cure. Some treatment options are available however, that can reduce the severity of the symptoms you may be experiencing and lower the impact that IC has on your quality of life. These options range from taking oral medications to reduce the individual symptoms, to having a product instilled into your bladder in an attempt to re-build the waterproof protective lining of your bladder. By discussing your condition with your Doctor and Nurse, you will be able to evaluate each option and determine which treatment will work best for you.

### Am I alone?

**No. You are certainly not alone in suffering from IC:**

- There is an estimated 400,000 in the UK who suffer with IC/BPS, of whom 90% are female and 10% are male<sup>1</sup>
- The average age at disease onset is 30-70 years of age<sup>2</sup>

#### References

- 1) <https://painuk.org/members/charities/cystitis-and-overactive-bladder-foundation-uk/> (Accessed April 2023).
- 2) Metts J F Interstitial Cystitis. Urgency and Frequency Syndrome Am. Fam. Physician 64 (7) 1199-1207 (2001)

