

Urologic Surgical Associates of Delaware

Specializing in Robotic Surgery

Interstitial Cystitis-Diet/Food List

The IC network (Interstitial Cystitis Network, www.ic-network.com) has created a comprehensive diet list that blends the data obtained from interstitial cystitis diet research studies, with information and reports gathered from IC patients and support groups for the last twenty years and this brochure is largely based on their work. This brief outlines the cause and effect of diet and IC symptoms and also attempts to give strategies based on that knowledge to help decrease IC symptoms.

How Foods Irritate the Bladder

One theory to explain the pain of IC is that the protective inside lining of the bladder, the sugar/protein matrix, is deficient. With this layer being deficient, the toxins in your own urine infiltrate into the underlying tissue layers causing pain. The medication, Elmiron, can help regenerate this sugar/protein matrix, or protective inside lining of the bladder, to decrease the pain of IC. Certain foods can also act as noxious stimuli in the urine causing pain of IC.

What Foods are Notorious for Causing Problems?

Foods high in acid (such as orange or cranberry juice) trigger pain and irritation by altering the PH of underlying bladder tissue.

Foods that stimulate nerves, such as caffeine, trigger the already sensitized nerves in the bladder.

Foods high in histamines, such as chocolate, can trigger an histamine-mediated immune response resulting in pain.

The Top Forbidden Foods

The top forbidden foods & beverages are those that bother most IC patients most of the time. They are notorious for causing IC flares. Even one small serving a day can trigger a night of sleeplessness and pain. **Thus, these are the first foods that should be eliminated from your diet.** In our experience, the patients who continue to consume these foods, especially that one cup of coffee a day (decaf or regular), are those who suffer the most with pain and discomfort. Furthermore, we believe that no therapy can counteract the damage and irritation created by a daily "acid" wash from these foods. If you want your bladder to calm down, your first step is to eliminate these high risk foods.

#1 - COFFEES - Coffee's (regular & decaf) are, by far, the most irritating to an IC bladder, not just for the caffeine but also for the very high acid level. We strongly suggest that you avoid all coffees if you are currently symptomatic. When your bladder has calmed down and your symptoms have improved, first try the herbal coffees (Pero or Cafix) and then try a low acid regular coffee (Puroast or Euromild).

#2 - REGULAR & GREEN TEAS - Regular teas (hot and iced) get their flavors from "tannic acid" and thus easily irritate the bladder. Green teas are also acidic. Powdered sugar free instant iced teas are also filled with nutrasweet and other irritating preservatives. **If you need tea, try a plain herbal chamomile or peppermint tea; these are somewhat calming and soothing to smooth muscle of the bowel and bladder.**

#3 - SODA & DIET SODA - Sodas are highly irritating not only for the citric acid used for flavoring, but also for the preservatives and flavorings. Diet sodas are even worse because nutrasweet is metabolized into a very strong acid.

#4 - FRUIT JUICES - Fruit juices, particularly cranberry, orange, lemon and tomato juices, are very acidic. You can try pear or apple juice, preferably a "baby" version. Which contain much less acid.

#5 - MULTIVITAMINS - Our bodies can't use the massive amount of vitamins found in supplements, thus they are quickly excreted out of the body through our urine. Both **Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid)** and **Vitamin B6** are notorious. Unless you require multivitamins for another medical condition, we suggest that you stop any multivitamins to determine if they are irritating your bladder.

#6 - ARTIFICIAL SUGARS – (NutraSweet, Aspartame, Sweet N Low, etc.) In the IC bladder, artificial sugars create profound irritation. We strongly suggest that you remove artificial sugars from your diet.

#7 - CHOCOLATE - Chocolate contains histamine which can trigger an immune system response in an IC bladder causing irritation and pain. If you're desperate for chocolate, try a white chocolate or a very dark, semisweet chocolate. It's the cheaper milk chocolates that seem to be the most irritating. We've also found some amazingly good carob candies that can easily satisfy your sweet tooth, including carob rice crunch bars, carob English toffee, carob honeymoons & more!

Debunking the IC Diet

The IC Diet is, at its core, a very healthy, simple natural diet. What it requires is that you eliminate many of the pre-manufactured foods that are notoriously irritating. If you're addicted to junk food, this is going to be a big change. Rather than buying pre-made foods (i.e. like Macaroni & Cheese), we suggest making it homemade where you know exactly what's in it. So, keep it simple and, when possible, organic. Organic foods are less contaminated with pesticides and chemicals which could irritate the bladder.

MEATS - You can have almost any fresh meat that you want but be quite careful with the sauces. BBQ sauce and steak sauce can be very irritating. Steak is not an irritant. Instead of ketchup or using strong spices, how about sautéing some mushrooms to go

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with it instead. Be wary of preserved and salted meats, particularly pepperoni, salami's etc.

VEGGIES - Luckily, most of the veggies are IC friendly with the exception of concentrated tomato products (i.e. tomato sauce, soup, etc.) Asparagus has bothered some patients.

DAIRY - Milk and eggs are IC friendly. Approach cheeses with caution, the milder and fresher the better. So, try a plain fresh mozzarella, cottage cheese, or soft monterrey jack. Farmer's cheeses, string cheeses and even parmesan cheese (in a small amount only) seem to be IC friendly for most patients. It's the harder, aged cheeses, like cheddar, Edam, Brie, or Gouda that can cause problems for some patients.

BREADS - When possible, go for the fresh, preservative free breads made by a local bakery. If you have a bread maker, make your own. If not, go for the simple breads, such as wheat, oat, white and rice. Rye and sourdough breads may create some problems.

FRUITS - Fruits are the hardest part of the IC diet because most fruits are very acidic. We suggest starting with pears and blueberries. If you do well with those, try a mild sweet apple (like Gala or Fuji) and just have a few slices to see how you feel. If you tolerate the apples well, try the tropical fruits of mango or papaya. If those sit well, try the melons like watermelon, cantaloupe or honeydew. Please note, however, that melons do provoke symptoms for quite a few patients. Please avoid all citrus.

DESSERTS - You can't go wrong with fresh, vanilla ice cream. Caramel sauce is IC friendly. If you're a chocoholic, look for carob candies instead.

Hot Drinks

We know that you're missing your coffee or teas but, if your symptoms are active, you have to calm and soothe your bladder first. We suggest starting first with hot water with honey (or sugar) or hot milk. Starbucks can easily give you hot milk with vanilla flavoring as a great morning start.

The first teas to try are peppermint or chamomile herb teas which are very bladder and bowel friendly. If you do well with these teas, you're next step is to try an herbal tea made from roasted carob. Celestial Seasonings & Davidson's Teas makes several which are fairly IC friendly, including Gingerbread Spice, Carob Mint, French Vanilla & others.

If your bladder is tolerating the roasted carob teas, you could then try the herbal coffees (Pero or Cafix). These are an acquired taste but quite a few patients like them. If your bladder doesn't react to the herbal coffees, then try the LOW ACID regular coffees made by Euromild or Puroast. Please note, however, that if you're bladder is symptomatic, we strongly suggest going back to the basics... water or milk.

Prelief Can Help Reduce Acid

Foods high in acid, such as coffee, orange or cranberry juice, chocolate, and hundreds of others, create tremendous irritation in much the same way that acid poured on a wound on your hand would feel. It hurts. Now, IC'ers are finding that taking Prelief tablets or granulate with those acid foods is a great help. A recent study, Hill, et al, done on 750 IC patients in New York, confirmed that Prelief was of better help with IC pain and symptoms than any oral drug or any invasive procedure, including surgery, with few or no side-effects. Prelief is a dietary supplement that takes the acid out of foods, and does it very well. Made by AkPharma, Prelief is available through many local drug stores, the Prelief website and, of course, through the ICN Shop.

More IC Diet Resources

For more information on Interstitial Cystitis including dietary and behavioral steps you could check out the IC Network on the web: <http://www.ic-network.com/diet/2009icdietlist.pdf>