

Interstitial Cystitis (IC) Diet General Urology

Many Interstitial Cystitis (IC) patients find that diet modification helps to control symptoms and avoid flare-ups. Others note that what they eat or drink seems to have little effect on how they feel. Anecdotal evidence collected by doctors and the Interstitial Cystitis Association (ICA) reveals that determining which foods and beverages may act as triggers is an individual matter.

Although there are broad guidelines that most IC patients can follow, discovering which particular foods may cause you problems requires perseverance. Many IC patients report that restricting their diet is an effective form of treatment and believe that it is worth the effort.

If you would like to explore the role diet may play in your symptoms, it is best to begin with an elimination diet that includes only those foods and beverages listed in the ‘okay to try’ sections, which most IC patients can tolerate. Try eating several small meals instead of one large one. Keeping a diet diary where you record everything you eat and drink is a useful technique for monitoring diet. After a few weeks, start introducing the foods and beverages listed in the ‘avoid’ sections, one at a time. If after consuming a given food or beverage, you have no flare-ups in symptoms, you should be able to continue consuming this item without problems. If any symptoms do occur, eliminate the given food from your diet.

After you have completed the work of determining which foods and beverages to eliminate from your diet, you may find that you can tolerate some troublesome items on a rotation basis. Try introducing these foods and beverages in small amounts once every five to seven days. If symptoms do not flare excessively, this can be a good alternative to giving up a favorite food completely.

Discovering which foods and beverages you should restrict can be a long process that requires discipline. You may also want to consider working with a nutritionist and/or a specialist in food and environmental allergies.

Diet Suggestions: Do’s and Don’ts

The idea behind managing your diet is to avoid foods and beverages that may irritate your bladder. Below is a list of some of the suggested items to restrict, followed by foods and beverages that a number of IC patients have noted do not cause them issues.

- **Milk/Dairy Products**

- Avoid: aged cheeses, sour cream, yogurt and chocolate
- Okay to Try: white chocolate, non-aged cheeses such as cottage or American, frozen yogurt and milk

- **Vegetables**

- Avoid: fava beans, lima beans, onions, tofu, soy beans and soy-based products, and tomatoes
- Okay to try: other vegetables and home grown tomatoes (which may be less acidic)

- **Fruits**

- Avoid: apples, apricots, avocados, bananas, cantaloupe, citrus fruits, cranberries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pineapples, plums, pomegranates, rhubarb, strawberries and juices made from these fruits
- Ok to try: melons (other than cantaloupes), blueberries and pears

- **Carbohydrates and Grains**

- Avoid: rye and sourdough bread
- Okay to try: other breads, pasta, potatoes and rice

- **Meats and Fish**

- Avoid: aged, canned, cured, processed or smoked meats and fish, anchovies, caviar, chicken livers, corned beef, and meats that contain nitrates or nitrites
- Okay to try: other poultry, fish and meat

- **Nuts**

- Avoid: most nuts
- Okay to try: almonds, cashews and pine nuts

- **Beverages**

- Avoid: alcoholic beverages (including beer and wine), carbonated drinks such as sodas, coffee or tea, and fruit juices, especially citrus or cranberry juice
- Okay to try: non-carbonated bottled water, decaffeinated, acid-free coffee and tea, and some herbal teas.

- **Seasonings**
 - Avoid: Mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, salsa, spicy foods (especially such ethnic foods as Chinese, Indian, Mexican and Thai), soy sauce, miso, other soy-based condiments, salad dressing and vinegar, including balsamic and flavored vinegars.
 - Okay to try: garlic and other seasonings
- **Preservatives and Additives**
 - Avoid: benzoyl alcohol, citric acid, monosodium glutamate (MSG), artificial sweeteners such as aspartame (Nutrasweet) and saccharin, foods containing preservatives and artificial ingredients and colors
 - Okay to try: N/A
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Avoid: tobacco, caffeine, diet pills, junk foods, recreational drugs, cold and allergy medications containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, and certain vitamins

Although the list of foods to avoid may initially appear daunting, remember there are still many foods you can enjoy. Some IC patients report that they have the least trouble with rice, potatoes, pasta, vegetables, meat and chicken. With these foods as a base for your diet, you can create nutritious and flavorful meals. You can still cook for family, friends, and share meals with them because the foods you can eat are the basic elements of a healthful, balanced diet. You may need to make some minor adjustments. You may also want to consider adding a source of fiber to your diet to promote regular bowel movements.

Suggestions

With some imaginative effort, you should be able to come up with substitutions for your favorite foods and drinks which will not aggravate your symptoms. Below are some suggestions

- Add a pinch of salt to carbonated beverages to make them flat
- Try reduced acid orange juice
- Try Prelief, a dietary supplement containing calcium glycerophosphate, has been shown in research studies on IC patients to help reduce bladder pain and urinary urgency when used with acidic foods and beverages. For more information and a free sample, call 1800-994-or go to www.prelief.com
- Boil down all sauces containing alcohol

Dining Out

Once you have determined which foods cause you issues, you should be able to eat in restaurants or at a social gathering without too much difficulty. You will simply need to ask about ingredients or stay away from dishes where ingredients are hard to discern. Spicy ethnic foods can pose a

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problem when dining out because the spices used may cause the release of trouble-making histamines. The ingredients in these dishes are often difficult to determine. Before ordering, ask your server what spices are used in particular dishes.

Food Allergies

Allergies to wheat, corn, rye, oats and barley are common. Other patients with milk allergies and lactose intolerance may experience a severe response to these foods. A number of IC patients report success with a diet which eliminates yeast, most carbohydrates, sugar, cheeses, molds, alcohol and fermented foods. If you suspect that food allergies play a role in your IC symptoms, you should consult a doctor or nutritionist who specializes in food and environmental allergies

Emergency Center

In case of any emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency center. *For non-emergencies during business hours, call our triage line at 904-202-7300 option 3.*