

What Can I Eat?

Understanding the Interstitial Cystitis/Bladder Pain Diet



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You Are Not Alone!

As a registered dietitian and interstitial cystitis patient, I fell into the unique position of really having to understand the diet connection to this fickle bladder disease. I know how hard it is to absorb all of this information, so I created this e-booklet describing the interstitial cystitis/bladder pain diet, providing it free to patients and providers.

I have also written two books for patients, *Confident Choices: Customizing the Interstitial Cystitis Diet*, and *Confident Choices: A Cookbook for IC and OAB*. These books are available from www.ic-diet.com, www.Amazon.com, and www.icnsales.com.

I also provide one-on-one phone coaching on diet and lifestyle information for patients. To inquire, email me at NutraConsults@aol.com or call **1-866-537-8766**.

Please know, I am here to help. You CAN get better! It just takes time, but there is always hope, so hang in there....

Sending you understanding hugs,

Julie B ☺

Understanding the Interstitial Cystitis/Painful Bladder Syndrome Diet

Determining Your Personal Trigger Foods

Diet modification is the first line of defense for patients struggling with interstitial cystitis or painful bladder syndrome (IC/PBS). Since sensitivity to various foods can vary among individuals, it is important to determine your personal trigger foods. This three-column system is based on emerging research as well as information gathered from patient and clinician experience.

Step by Step Through the Food Categories

Bladder Friendly includes foods that rarely bother even the most sensitive IC bladders. If you are newly diagnosed, eat these foods until you experience some relief from your symptoms. It may take a few weeks, but do your best to stick with it!

Try It includes foods that are generally safe to eat though they might bother more sensitive bladders. If your bladder is improving, these foods are safe to try. Test one food at a time, beginning with a small quantity such as 1/2 a piece of fruit or a dash of spice, gradually increasing portion size over the course of a few days. If you do not react to the food, you can add it to your own personal “Bladder Friendly” list. If your symptoms flare after consuming a problem food, return to the foods you know to be ok for your bladder until the flare passes.

Caution includes foods which trigger bladder discomfort. Try these foods only if your bladder is no longer sensitive.

Additional Hints

1. **Keep a good food and symptoms diary** while you are experimenting with your diet. It can take from minutes to hours for a problem food or beverage to trigger symptoms.
2. **Avoid trigger foods when starting new therapies, such as Elmiron®.** Problem foods may compromise the effectiveness of those treatments.

3. **Don't be afraid to eat.** In addition to the many foods that you can enjoy from the "Bladder Friendly" list, as your symptoms improve, add variety to your diet by testing foods from the "Try It" list. Some bladder patients, occasionally, may be able to consume small quantities foods from the "Caution" list.
4. **Shop for fresh foods whenever possible.** Processed foods often contain ingredients that can be irritating including some preservatives, artificial flavorings, additives and/or artificial vitamins. Organic foods often contain fewer additives and may be useful in an IC diet. Always read labels to look for hidden triggers.
5. **Try different brands.** Many "brands" of the same food have completely different ingredients and additives and could irritate the bladder.

Avoid foods that you know you are allergic to even if they are included in this diet guide. Pre-existing food allergies, such as an allergy to nuts or grains, can also trigger bladder irritation and/or a stronger allergic

Developed in partnership with:

Julie Beyer MA, RD, Author & Nutrition Counselor (www.ic-diet.com)

[Confident Choices: Customizing the IC Diet](#)

[Confident Choices: A Cookbook for IC and OAB](#)

Barbara Gordon, RD, Executive Director

Interstitial Cystitis Association (www.ichelp.org)

Beverley Laumann, Author, Support Group Leader

[A Taste of the Good Life: A Cookbook for an IC Diet](#)

[Fresh Tastes by Bev](#) – IC diet column

Jill Osborne MA, Author & President

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The IC Diet and Food List

Bladder Friendly	Try It	Caution
Beverages		
<p>water – try different kinds juice – blueberry, pear milk⁺ milk substitutes – almond⁺, rice, Lactaid[†] milkshake – vanilla⁺ tea – chamomile⁺, peppermint⁺ non-dairy creamers – check label eggnog – non alcoholic⁺, without problem ingredients</p>	<p>juice – low-acid orange, grape, some apple, baby coffee & coffee substitutes – herbal, low-acid decaf, roasted carob tea – alfalfa, roasted carob soda – root beer with ice (decaffeinated, not diet) sports drinks – test to find one that works for you (e.g., blue Gatorade)</p>	<p>alcohol – irritating and often contraindicated with many IC medications water – carbonated, vitamin, flavored juice – cranberry, orange, acai milk – chocolate, soy coffee – regular, decaf teas – regular, green, herbal sodas – colas, citrus, diet drink powders – Kool-aid®, or powdered ice tea drinks sports drinks energy drinks – guarana, mate</p>
Dairy		
<p>cheeses – American, mozzarella, cheddar cheese (mild), feta, ricotta⁺, string cheeses⁺ cream cheese cottage cheese⁺ ice cream⁺ – most milk⁺ milk substitutes – Lactaid sherbet – no citrus or chocolate flavors Rice Dream® dessert – vanilla whipped cream – from dairy, Cool Whip, Dream Whip</p>	<p>cheeses – blue cheese, brie, brick parmesan, camembert, cheddar cheese (sharp), edam, emmenthaler, gruyere hard jack, Monterey Jack, parmesan (fresh & canned), Roquefort, stilton, Swiss buttermilk sour cream – accent on a baked potato or soup pizza – plain, chicken & garlic, veggie or made with white sauce – no pepperoni sorbet yogurt – blueberry, vanilla, plain</p>	<p>cheeses – processed, Cheez Whiz ice cream – caution with citrus or chocolate flavors soy products – soy milk, soy cheeses</p>
Meats, Fish, Poultry, and Protein		
<p>eggs⁺ poultry – chicken⁺, turkey fish⁺ beef⁺ seafood – clams, crabmeat (not canned), lobster, shrimp lamb⁺ pork protein powder – whey, egg whites veal liver – beef or chicken</p>	<p>garden/veggie burgers – without soy products beef – corned beef sandwich meats – liverwurst, ham (fresh or boiled, without heavy preservatives or flavorings.) bacon anchovies caviar prosciutto sausages – without problem ingredients</p>	<p>cured meats – bologna, pepperoni, salami canned crab meat hot dogs sausage – most smoked fish soy products – soy veggie patties, protein powder, tofu</p>

Bladder Friendly	Try It	Caution
Vegetables		
<p>asparagus avocado beans – <i>black eyed peas, garbanzo, lentils, pinto, white, most dried beans</i> beets broccoli brussels sprouts cabbage carrots+ cauliflower celery chives corn+ cucumber eggplant green beans greens – <i>collard greens, kale, mustard greens, okra, swiss chard, spinach, bok choy</i> lettuce & most salad greens mushrooms+ olives – <i>black</i> parsley+ peas – <i>green+, snow peas, split peas</i> bell peppers – <i>yellow, orange, red</i> potatoes+ – <i>white, yams</i> pumpkin radishes rhubarb rutabaga squash+ – <i>most, plus zucchini</i> turnips</p>	<p>beans – <i>fava, kidney beans, lima beans, black beans</i> bell peppers – <i>green</i> olives – <i>green</i> greens – <i>chicory, dandelion greens, purslane, turnip greens</i> leeks (cooked) onions – <i>white, red, cooked bulb onion, raw green tomatoes – homegrown, low acid</i> watercress</p>	<p>chili peppers onions – <i>raw bulb onions</i> pickles sauerkraut soy beans – <i>edamame, roasted</i> tomato – <i>tomato sauces, tomato juice</i> tofu</p>
Fruits		
<p>apples – <i>Gala, Fuji, Pink Lady</i> applesauce – <i>homemade with Gala, Fuji, or Pink Lady apples</i> blueberries+ coconut – <i>without preservatives</i> dates – <i>without preservatives</i> pears+ rhubarb watermelon</p>	<p>applesauce – <i>canned or baby</i> apricots bananas berries – <i>blackberries, raspberries, olallieberries</i> cherimoya cherries – <i>fresh, maraschino</i> currants figs mango melon – <i>Crenshaw, honeydew</i> peaches plum</p>	<p>berries – <i>cranberries, most</i> citrus dried fruit – <i>with preservatives</i> grapes guava kiwi fruit melons – <i>cantaloupe</i> nectarines passion fruit papaya persimmon pineapple starfruit strawberries</p>

Bladder Friendly	Try It	Caution
Grains		
<p>breads – <i>corn bread+</i>, <i>oat bread+</i>, <i>pita</i>, <i>potato bread+</i>, <i>white bread+</i>, <i>Italian sweet bread</i>, <i>whole wheat bread</i> (i.e. <i>Ezekiel</i>)</p> <p>cereals – <i>most cereals without problem ingredients</i>, <i>oat cereal</i>, <i>rice cereal</i> (<i>hot or cold</i>)</p> <p>crackers – <i>matzo</i></p> <p>grains – <i>couscous</i>, <i>grits</i>, <i>millet</i>, <i>quinoa+</i>, <i>spelt</i></p> <p>flours – <i>buckwheat</i>, <i>wheat</i></p> <p><i>pasta</i></p> <p>rice+</p>	<p>breads – <i>rye</i>, <i>sourdough</i></p> <p>cereals – <i>instant packaged hot cereal</i></p> <p>crackers – <i>without problem ingredients</i></p> <p>grain – <i>amaranth</i></p>	<p>breads – <i>made with unsafe ingredients and/or heavily processed and fortified</i></p> <p>cereals – <i>heavily preserved, sweetened, heavily fortified, flavored</i>,</p> <p>flour – <i>soy</i></p> <p>pasta – <i>prepared or boxed</i></p> <p><i>pasta dishes</i></p> <p>rice – <i>boxed dishes</i></p>
Soups		
<p>homemade soup & stock – <i>from okay meats and vegetables</i></p>	<p>soups – <i>canned, low sodium, organic soups</i> (<i>without problem ingredients</i>)</p>	<p>soups – <i>canned, low sodium, organic soups</i> (<i>without problem ingredients</i>)</p>
Sweets and Desserts		
<p>berries – <i>blueberries</i></p> <p>cake – <i>homemade pound cake*</i>, <i>angel food*</i>, <i>homemade white/yellow cakes*</i>, <i>carrot</i></p> <p>frostings – <i>homemade vanilla frosting</i>, <i>homemade caramel frosting</i>, <i>carob</i>, <i>whipped cream</i></p> <p>carob</p> <p>cookies – <i>oatmeal*</i>, <i>shortbread</i>, <i>sugar</i></p> <p>muffins – <i>carrot</i></p> <p>cheesecake</p> <p>creme brûlée</p> <p>custards+</p> <p>pie – <i>custard</i>, <i>cream pie</i>, <i>homemade apple pie</i> (<i>with safe apples</i>), <i>pumpkin pie</i></p> <p>divinity</p> <p>sweet breads – <i>homemade zucchini bread+</i></p> <p>maple syrup</p> <p>pastries – <i>plain</i>, <i>almond</i>, <i>pear</i></p> <p>ice cream – <i>peppermint</i>, <i>vanilla+</i></p> <p>pudding – <i>tapioca</i>, <i>vanilla+</i>, <i>rice+</i></p> <p>milkshake – <i>vanilla*</i></p> <p>sweeteners – <i>brown sugar</i>, <i>honey*</i>, <i>sugar</i></p>	<p>artificial sweeteners – <i>Splenda®</i> (<i>sucralose</i>)</p> <p>candy – <i>caramel</i>, <i>licorice</i></p> <p>chocolate – <i>white</i></p> <p>ice cream – <i>caramel</i>, <i>coconut</i>, <i>mango</i>, <i>peppermint</i>, <i>butter pecan</i></p> <p>sorbet – <i>coconut</i></p> <p>pastries – <i>blueberry</i>, <i>cinnamon</i></p> <p>popsicles – <i>some</i></p> <p>sweet bread – <i>banana</i></p> <p>yogurt – <i>frozen</i></p>	<p>artificial sweeteners – <i>acesulfame K</i>, <i>aspartame</i>, <i>Nutrasweet®</i>, <i>saccharine</i>, <i>Sweet-N-Low</i>, <i>stevia</i></p> <p>candy – <i>red hot-type cinnamon</i></p> <p>chocolate – <i>cocoa</i>, <i>milk</i>, <i>bittersweet</i>, <i>dark</i></p> <p>ice cream – <i>chocolate</i>, <i>coffee</i>, <i>rocky road</i></p> <p>sorbets – <i>with problem fruits</i></p> <p>pastries – <i>with problem fruits</i></p> <p>pie – <i>pecan</i>, <i>mincemeat</i></p> <p>desserts – <i>with problem nuts</i></p> <p><i>fruitcakes</i></p>

Bladder Friendly	Try It	Caution
Snacks		
<p>almonds carrots celery chips (plain) – corn , potato crackers – soda or soup fruit bars – blueberry, pear milkshake – vanilla oatmeal bars peanuts, peanut butter popcorn pretzels – plain</p>	<p>donuts – glazed, old fashioned graham crackers fruit & nut bars – with safe ingredients licorice pizza – plain, chicken & garlic, veggie or made with white sauce - no pepperoni</p>	<p>chips – <i>potato</i> (seasoned, barbequed) dessert cakes – fast food restaurants</p>
Fats, Oils, Nuts, and Seeds		
<p>nuts – almonds, cashews, peanuts butters – almond, peanut oils – canola, coconut, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, sesame, soy margarine lard shortening salad dressing – homemade without problem ingredients</p>	<p>nuts – macadamia, pecans, walnuts mayonnaise tahini seeds – sunflower seeds shortening – butter-flavored</p>	<p>nuts – filberts, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios oils – check label salad dressings – most</p>
Condiments, Seasonings, and Additives		
<p>allspice almond extract anise basil+ caraway seed coriander dill fennel garlic+ mace marjoram+ oregano+ poppy seed rosemary+ sage+ salt – in small quantities thyme tarragon vanilla extract</p>	<p>black pepper celery seed cilantro cinnamon – powdered citric acid – in small quantities cumin – in small quantities dried parsley dried chervil ginger lemon extract mayonnaise malt powder nutmeg onion powder orange extract turmeric</p>	<p>ascorbic acid autolyzed yeast BHA and BHT benzoates catsup (ketchup) cayenne cloves chili powder horseradish hot curry powder hydrolyzed protein meat tenderizers metabisulfites miso MSG – monosodium glutamate mustard oleoresin paprika paprika pickles red pepper soy sauce sulfites tamari vinegar Worcestershire sauce</p>

Meal Planning Ideas

When making your meal plans, include everything you will eat: breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and snacks. The website www.MyPyramid.gov has wonderful tools to help determine which food groups to include in your plan. Once you have a basic plan, add foods from the “Bladder Friendly” column of the new IC Food List. It is not necessary to plan fancy meals. New patients especially, find it easier to keep meals as simple as possible. It is much easier to sort out which foods may cause your symptoms to flare if you are eating simple foods without multiple ingredients. Here are some other hints:

1. **Figure out meals a week or a month at a time.** Although it may take some time up front, it can help keep you on track, minimizing the chances that you will make a choice at the last minute that can upset your bladder.
2. **Make menu planning a family affair.** Consulting with other family members about menu choices can increase their understanding of your condition.
3. **Include foods that might be triggers for you, but that your family can eat.** It was nearly a year before I realized that I had not been buying strawberries for my family just because I couldn't have them!
4. **Use your menu to create a grocery list for the week.** Often people walk through the supermarket waiting for inspiration to strike. Sticking to a grocery list can help you resist buying items impulsively, which can be tough on the wallet and the bladder.
5. **Recycle your weekly meal plans.** Once you developed a few weeks of menus that you and your family enjoy, go ahead and reuse them. Save the grocery lists, too! Hospitals, schools, and nursing homes use this “cycle menu” approach to simplify planning.

Remember, eating healthy and avoiding foods that can trigger bladder symptoms is something you have within your control. You CAN do it!

For more information about meal planning, see www.ic-diet.com, *Confident Choices: Customizing the Interstitial Cystitis Diet*, and *Confident Choices: A Cookbook for IC and OAB*.

