

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.
6. **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 reaction.

Developed in partnership with:

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

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

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

Fresh Tastes by Bev – IC diet column

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IC/PBS Food List

	Bladder Friendly	Try It	Caution
Note: Foods labeled with a plus sign (+) can be especially soothing during an IC flare.			
 Beverages	<p>water – test to find one that works for you 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 – 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 – not only irritating to the bladder but also contraindicated with many IC medications water –carbonated, vitamin, flavored juice – cranberry, orange, acai milk – chocolate, soy coffee – regular & decaf teas – regular, green, herbal, iced sodas – colas, citrus, orange, diet drink powders – such as Kool-aid®, lemonade, orange, or powdered ice tea drinks sports drinks energy drinks – guarana, mate</p>
 Grains	<p>bread – corn bread⁺, oat bread⁺, pita, potato bread⁺, white bread⁺, Italian sweet bread, whole wheat bread (i.e. Ezekiel) cereals – most cereals without problem ingredients, oat cereal, rice cereal (hot or cold) crackers – matzo grains – couscous, grits, millet, quinoa⁺, spelt flours – buckwheat, wheat pasta rice⁺</p>	<p>bread – rye, sourdough cereals – instant packaged hot cereal crackers – without problem ingredients grain – amaranth</p>	<p>bread – made with unsafe ingredients and/or heavily processed and fortified cereals – heavily preserved, sweetened, heavily fortified, flavored, flour – soy pasta – prepared or boxed pasta dishes rice – boxed dishes</p>
 Fats and Nuts	<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> <p>If you have nut or other food allergies, talk with your healthcare provider about your special diet needs.</p>

	Bladder Friendly	Try It	Caution
 <p>Eggs, Meat, Fish and Poultry</p>	<p>eggs⁺ poultry – <i>chicken⁺, turkey</i> fish⁺ beef⁺ seafood – <i>clams, crabmeat (not canned), lobster, shrimp</i> lamb⁺ pork protein powder – <i>whey, egg whites</i> veal liver – <i>beef or chicken</i></p>	<p>garden/veggie burgers – <i>without soy products</i> beef – <i>corned beef</i> sandwich meats – <i>liverwurst, ham (fresh or boiled, without heavy preservatives or flavorings.)</i> bacon anchovies caviar prosciutto sausages – <i>without problem ingredients</i></p>	<p>cured meats – <i>bologna, pepperoni, salami</i> canned crab meat hot dogs sausage – <i>most</i> smoked fish soy products – <i>soy veggie patties, protein powder, tofu</i></p>
 <p>Dairy, Cheeses, Frozen Desserts</p>	<p>cheeses – <i>American, mozzarella, cheddar cheese (mild), feta, ricotta⁺, string cheeses⁺</i> cream cheese cottage cheese⁺ ice cream⁺ – <i>most</i> milk⁺ milk substitutes – <i>Lactaid</i> sherbet – <i>no citrus or chocolate flavors</i> Rice Dream[®] dessert – <i>vanilla</i> whipped cream – <i>Cool Whip</i></p>	<p>cheeses – <i>blue cheese, brie, brick parmesan, camembert, cheddar cheese (sharp), edam, emmenthaler, gruyere hard jack, Monterey Jack, parmesan (fresh & canned), Roquefort, stilton, Swiss</i> buttermilk sour cream – <i>accent on a baked potato or soup</i> pizza – <i>plain, chicken & garlic, veggie or made with white sauce - no pepperoni</i> sorbet yogurt – <i>blueberry, vanilla, plain</i></p>	<p>cheeses – <i>processed, Cheez Whiz</i> ice cream – <i>caution with citrus or chocolate flavors</i> soy products – <i>soy milk, soy cheeses</i></p>
 <p>Fruits</p>	<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⁺ watermelon</p>	<p>applesauce – <i>commercial or baby</i> apricots bananas berries – <i>blackberries, raspberries, olallieberries</i> cherimoya cherries – <i>fresh, maraschino</i> citrus peels currants figs mango melon – <i>Crenshaw, honeydew</i> peaches plums raisins – <i>brown</i> rhubarb</p>	<p>berries – <i>cranberries, most</i> citrus – <i>lemons, limes, oranges, grapefruit</i> dried fruit – <i>with preservatives</i> grapes guava kiwi fruit melons – <i>cantaloupe</i> nectarines passion fruit papaya persimmon pineapple starfruit strawberries raisins – <i>golden</i></p>

	Bladder Friendly	Try It	Caution
 <p>Vegetables and Dried Beans</p>	<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>summer, winter, 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</i> tomatoes – <i>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>
 <p>Soups</p>	<p>homemade soup & stock – <i>from okay meats and vegetables</i></p>	<p>soups – <i>canned, low sodium, organic soups (without problem ingredients)</i></p>	<p>bouillon – <i>cubes, powder</i> canned – <i>most</i> packaged soups – <i>most</i></p>

	Bladder Friendly	Try It	Caution
 <p>Snacks</p>	<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 – potato (seasoned, barbequed) dessert cakes – fast food restaurants</p>
 <p>Desserts and Sweets</p>	<p>berries – blueberries cake – homemade pound cake⁺, angel food⁺, homemade white/yellow cakes⁺, carrot frostings - homemade vanilla frosting, homemade caramel frosting, carob, whipped cream carob cookies – oatmeal⁺, shortbread, sugar⁺ muffins – carrot cheesecake creme brûlée custards⁺ pie – custard, cream pie, homemade apple pie (with safe apples), pumpkin pie divinity sweet breads – homemade zucchini bread⁺ candy – licorice maple syrup pastries – plain, almond, pear ice cream – peppermint, vanilla⁺ pudding – tapioca, vanilla⁺, rice⁺ milkshake – vanilla⁺ sweeteners – brown sugar, honey⁺, sugar</p>	<p>artificial sweeteners – Splenda® (sucralose) candy – caramel chocolate – white ice cream – caramel, coconut, mango, peppermint, butter pecan sorbet – coconut pastries – blueberry, cinnamon popsicles – some sweet bread – banana yogurt – frozen</p>	<p>artificial sweeteners – acesulfame K, aspartame, Nutrasweet®, saccharine, Sweet-N-Low, stevia candy – red hot-type cinnamon chocolate – cocoa, milk, bittersweet, dark ice cream – chocolate, coffee, rocky road sorbets – with problem fruits pastries – with problem fruits pie – pecan, mincemeat desserts – with problem nuts fruitcakes</p>

	Bladder Friendly	Try It	Caution
 <p>Condiments, Seasonings, and Flavor Enhancers</p>	allspice almond extract anise basil ⁺ caraway seed coriander dill fennel garlic ⁺ mace marjoram ⁺ oregano ⁺ poppy seed rosemary ⁺ sage ⁺ salt <i>in small quantities</i> thyme tarragon vanilla extract	black pepper celery seed cilantro cinnamon – <i>powdered</i> citric acid – <i>in small quantities</i> cumin (small amt) dried parsley dried chervil ginger lemon extract mayonnaise malt powder nutmeg onion powder orange extract turmeric	ascorbic acid autolyzed yeast BHA and BHT benzoates catsup (ketchup) cayenne cloves chili powder horseradish hot curry powder hydrolyzed protein meat tenderizers miso mustard oleoresin paprika paprika pickles red pepper soy sauce tamari vinegar worcestershire sauce MSG – <i>monosodium glutamate</i> metabisulfites sulfites
 <p>Fiber Supplements</p>	acacia fiber Benefiber [®] Metamucil [®] – <i>plain psyllium</i> bulk psyllium fiber – <i>not sugar free</i>	Colace [®] Metamucil [®] – <i>cinnamon wafers</i>	Metamucil [®] – <i>orange, berry burst</i> psyllium fiber – <i>sugar-free due to the presence of artificial sweeteners</i> senna

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