

# Treating Interstitial Cystitis: Lifestyle Changes



Interstitial cystitis (IC) is a type of bladder problem. It makes the bladder wall sore and easily irritated. This can cause pain, urgency, frequency, and other uncomfortable symptoms. IC can be treated in different ways. This includes making some lifestyle changes to help manage your symptoms. Below are some common lifestyle changes that may be part of your treatment.

## Staying away from certain foods

Your healthcare provider may advise you to stay away from certain foods that can make your symptoms worse. These can include:

- Alcoholic drinks
- Spicy foods
- Chocolate
- Coffee and caffeinated drinks
- Citrus fruits and juices
- Tomatoes
- Fizzy (carbonated) drinks

Start by cutting certain foods out of your diet that may likely cause symptoms, for a few weeks. Then add the foods gradually back into your diet. See which foods, if any, have any effect on your symptoms.

## Retraining your bladder

Your healthcare provider may also advise bladder retraining. This includes holding urine in for longer and longer amounts of time. The goal is to stretch the bladder and increase the amount the bladder can hold.

## Managing stress



Your healthcare provider may also teach you different methods to help manage stress. Stress doesn't cause IC. But it can make your symptoms worse. Your provider may also advise you to try these things for stress relief:

- Meditation
- Massage
- Yoga
- Exercise (start with walking or swimming, which are less likely to cause symptoms)
- Physical therapy for your pelvic floor muscles (pelvic myofascial exercises)

## Quitting smoking

If you smoke, it's important to quit. Cigarettes may make IC symptoms worse. They also irritate the bladder. And constant coughing (smoker's cough) puts pressure on the belly area. It may increase the pain linked to pelvic floor muscles.

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