

## ***Diet***

*There is no scientific evidence linking diet to IC / PBS, but many doctors and patients find that alcohol, tomatoes, spices, chocolate, caffeinated and citrus beverages, and high-acid foods may contribute to bladder irritation and inflammation. Some patients also note that their symptoms worsen after eating or drinking products containing artificial sweeteners. Patients may try eliminating various items from their diet and reintroducing them one at a time to determine which, if any, affect their symptoms. However, maintaining a varied, well balanced diet is important.*

### **The IC Diet: A list of problem food.**

There are a variety of lists floating around the IC community which document some of the diverse IC food irritants. Many lists are similar, yet not identical. Whether or not a particular food is listed is sometimes a matter of the beliefs, priorities, or personal experience of the author(s).

The problem foods we've listed below are the most common ones that thousands of IC patients have reported trouble with. Your goal is to determine IF these foods irritate you, perhaps by using an elimination diet! If you are like most, you'll probably be able to eat a few of the foods listed as "problematic". You also might have to avoid a few others listed as "okay". Remember, this list is only a rough guide. Be prepared to be creative with your meals and in your kitchen! Please note: About 15% of women with IC also have vulvar pain (vulvodynia). Some of the foods in the "May Be Okay" column have high levels of oxalates, which women with vulvodynia react to. Those who don't have vulvodynia typically don't react to the oxalates, so they may have a much easier time getting away with foods in the "May Be Okay" column.

	USUALLY OK	MAY BE OK	USUALLY PROBLEMATIC
Beverages	<a href="#">chamomile herb tea</a> Evian® water <a href="#">pear juice</a> <a href="#">pure Blueberry Juice</a> milk <a href="#">peppermint herb tea</a>	alfalfa tea bottled water <a href="#">herbal coffees</a> <a href="#">lowacid decaf coffee</a> low acid baby juices gin rice milk root beer w/ ice rum tap water vodka	beer carbonatedH2O chocolate milk citrus juices cranberry juice herb tea blends green teas most fruit juices regular coffee sodas soy milk

Grain Products	buckwheat corn bread couscous matzo millet oat bread oatmeal pasta pitas potato bread quinoa <a href="#">rice</a> spelt white bread	amaranth grits rye bread sourdoughbread some graham crackers w/o problem ingredients whole wheat bread	tea wines bread or cereal w/ preservatives soy flour
Fats and Nuts	butter canola oil coconut w/o preservatives coconut oil corn oil margarine <a href="#">olive oil</a> peanut oil safflower oil sesame oil shortening soy oil	almonds <a href="#">almond butter</a> cashews tahini sunflower seeds	filberts hazelnuts macadamia nuts mayonnaise most salad dressings peanuts pecans pistachio nuts English and black walnuts
Soups	homemade soups from ok meats and vegetables	<a href="#">Health Valley® chicken broth</a> <a href="#">Some canned soups w/o problem ingredients</a>	bouillion cubes bouillion powder most packaged and canned soups
Meat, Fish and Poultry	beef chicken eggs fish lamb liver (beef or chicken) pork shellfish shrimp turkey veal	anchovies bacon Canadian bacon caviar corned beef liverwurst prosciutto some sausages w/o problem ingredients	bologna ham hot dogs most sausage pepperoni salami smoked fish
Cheeses and Other Dairy	cream cheese cottage cheese	buttermilk canned Parmesan	aged cheeses blue cheese

	feta	Cool Whip®	brie
	mozzarella	Monterey jack	brick parmesan
	ricotta	some sherbets	camembert
	string cheeses	some frozen yogurt	cheddar
	whipped cream	Rice Dream®	edam
	vanilla ice cream		emmenthaler
			gruyer
			hard jack
			roquefort
			sorbet
			soy milk
			soy cheese
			sour cream
			stilton
			swiss
			yogurt
			chili peppers
Vegetables	broccoli	avocado	fava beans
and Dried	brussels sprouts	beets	lima beans
Beans	cabbage	chicory	pickles
	carrots	cooked bulb	raw bulb onions
	cauliflower	onions	sauerkraut
	chives	cooked leeks	soy beans
	collard greens	dandelion greens	(edamame)
	corn	eggplant	tomato
	cucumber	low acid tomatoes	tomato sauces
	kale	purslane	tomato juice
	lentils	raw green onions	tofu
	lettuce	rhubarb	
	mustard greens	rutabagas	
	mushrooms	swiss chard	
	most dried beans	spinach	
	okra	turnip greens	
	parsley	watercress	
	peas		
	potatoes		
	pumpkin		
	radishes		
	snow peas		
	split peas		
	summer squash		
	turnips		
	winter squash		
	yams		
	zucchini		

Fruits	dates w/o preservatives coconut w/o preservatives pears <a href="#">- pear pear bars</a> <a href="#">- pear blueberry bars</a>	bananas blueberries brown raisins cherimoya citrus peels crenshaw melon dried currants Gala apples honeydew mango (small amt) maraschino cherries rhubarb watermelon <a href="#">- cinnamon pear jelly</a> <a href="#">- cinnamon pear maple syrup</a> <a href="#">- blueberry preserves</a>	apricots all citrus fruit cantaloupe cherries dried fruit w/ preservatives peaches most plums most dried figs golden raisins grapes guava kiwi fruit most berries passion fruit papaya persimmon pineapple starfruit
Desserts and Sweets	brown sugar <a href="#">carob</a> carrot muffins or cake creme brulee custards divinity homemade pound cake homemade white/yellow cakes homemade vanilla frosting homemade caramel frosting honey licorice maple syrup pear pastries sugar sugar cookies tapioca vanilla ice cream vanilla pudding <a href="#">Dr. Oetkers Vanilla Cake Mix</a> <a href="#">Dr. Oetkers Vanilla Frosting Mix</a> <a href="#">Dr. Oetkers Corn Muffins</a>	banana bread blueberry pastries caramel candies peppermint ice cream plain pastries w/ almonds plain cheesecakes some frozen yogurt some hard candies w/o acids some popsicles Splenda® (sucralose) stevia white chocolate	acesulfame K aspartame catsup chocolate coffee ice cream desserts w/ problem nuts mustard pastries w/ problem fruits pecan pie sorbets store-bought fruitcakes mincemeat pie Nutrasweet® saccharine

	<a href="#">Dr. Oetkers Carrot Muffins</a>		
	<a href="#">Dr. Oetkers Apple Muffins</a>		
	<a href="#">Dr. Oetkers Bisquit Mix</a>		
	<a href="#">Dr. Oetkers Vanilla Pudding</a>		
Seasonings and Additives	allspice	black pepper	ascorbic acid
	almond extract	celery seed	autolyzed yeast
	anise	cilantro	BHA and BHT
	basil	cinnamon	benzoates
	caraway seed	cumin (small amt)	caffeine
	coriander	dried parsley	cayenne
	dill	dried chervil	cloves
	fennel	ginger	chili powder
	garlic	lemon extract	citric acid
	mace	malt powder	hot curry powder
	marjoram	nutmeg	hydrolyzed protein
	oregano	onion powder	meat tenderizers
	poppy seed	orange extract	miso
	rosemary	turmeric	oleoresin paprika
	sage		paprika
	salt		red pepper
	thyme		soy sauce
	tarragon		tamari
	vanilla extract		vinegar
			worcestershire sauce
			MSG (monosodium glutamate)
			metabisulfites
			sulfites

### Our five worst foods

These foods win our vote as the biggest misery makers for people with IC! These are the foods we hear about from IC patients all the time. Of course just because they cause trouble for so many others, that doesn't guarantee they'll make you miserable too. But if you do eat these, watch out! Be sure to pay close attention to how you feel afterwards. If you feel worse, then there is a good chance that this is a trigger food for you. Information is power. Whenever possible, talk with other patients and compare your trigger foods. They may help you discover some hidden triggers in your own diet.

#### #1: Coffees and Teas

Yes, we know that "lattes" are all the rage these days. Coffee is, regrettably, our number one bladder irritant. In a sensitive bladder, the acid, caffeine and tannins in coffees have little competition for causing intense irritation and discomfort. In our experience, the patients who seem to struggle the most with symptoms are those who still have that one cup of coffee (or tea) in the morning.

Is decaf coffee safe?? For most patients in flares, it isn't. A decaffeinated coffee is still very high in acid and can provoke symptoms. There are a number of herbal coffees, such as Cafix or Pero, that patients have reported to enjoy. There are also low acid coffees, such as Euromild & Puroast, that may be more tolerable. If you're struggling with IC symptoms and/or a flare, the safest hot drink is hot water and honey!

Teas can be surprisingly irritating to the bladder. A regular tea, such as Earl Grey, is usually out of the question. Remember, just as with coffees, decaf regular teas can still provoke symptoms. Herbal teas, particularly herbal blends, are also notorious for triggering symptoms due to the acidity added from other herbs, such as rosehips. Despite the hype, green tea is so acidic that it can create agonizing pain for some. If you're a tea lover, we suggest that you try a plain organic or mint tea!

You can find a wide variety of low acid, IC Friendly coffees, herbal coffees & teas in the [Health Shop!](#)

#### #2: Cranberry & Other Fruit Juices

Otherwise known as the ACID BOMB when it hits, cranberry juice may be the biggest bladder irritant in an IC patient's diet. It's often recommended for consumption during urinary tract infections because it is believed to have substances in it that help keep bacteria from sticking to the bladder wall. (If they can't stick, they can't infect. They just get flushed out). But cranberry juice can VERY be difficult for an IC bladder to tolerate. Citrus juices such as orange juice, grapefruit juice, lemonade, will also be very irritating to the bladder. If you're desperate for a juice, we recommend trying a Baby Pear or Apple Juice. Baby juices do not use as much citric acid and seem to be much more bladder friendly!

#### #3: Carbonated beverages

If we had \$1 for everytime a patient reported that they had a flare from drinking a diet cola, we'd be rich today! Whether it be plain carbonated Perrier water or flavored sodas, IC patients often complain about their irritating effects on the bladder. The biggest problem appears to be the acid, though most flavored sodas also have big doses of caffeine.

The most difficult carbonated beverage for an IC bladder to tolerate appears to be diet cola. Diet colas are a quadruple whammy of acidic carbonation, citric and other acids, caffeine, and artificial sweeteners-- four well-known bladder irritants. Taken all at once it can be an IC bladder's nightmare! If you must have a soda, try a non-diet, usually non-caffeinated, root beer-- and load the cup with plenty of ice to dilute it!

#### #4: Tomato Products

They're found in so many foods these days, tomatoes and tomato products are darn hard to avoid. Though we think of them as mild mannered vegetables, those tempting red globes are really a very acidic fruit. A few IC patients can tolerate tomato sauces on pizzas and pasta, but most cannot. Low acid tomatoes may be good substitutes for some people. The book *A Taste of the Good Life: A Cookbook for an Interstitial Cystitis Diet*, has a lengthy list of lower-acid tomato varieties you can grow at home!

#### #5: Multivitamins

Multivitamins are notoriously irritating to the IC bladder due to both the Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid) and Vitamin B6. Unless you require multivitamins for another medical condition, we suggest that stop any multivitamins to determine if they are irritating your bladder.

## #6: Tobacco

Ok, we admit it, we cheated to get this one on the list... tobacco isn't really a food. But it does have some significant effects on an IC bladder. For one, it acts to constrict the bladder's blood vessels, interfering with the body's natural way of washing out inflammatory substances from the bladder tissues. Veteran IC patients prefer less pain rather than more. Is that cigarette worth a night and day of pain?

The two hardest foods to give up

As a support group leader, every once in a while I encounter an IC patient who, despite their horrible, continuous pain, insists on drinking coffee and/or eating chocolate bars. Coffee and chocolate are among the most common comfort foods. We depend on these to wake up, soothe our bad mood, or just give us a cheerful lift. In addition to caffeine, these both have a load of substances any one of which can potentially affect an IC bladder.

For me, as an IC patient, it was a choice between pain and frequency or coffee. I chose not to be in pain. But, still, some coffee addicts insist that they can drink coffee and not experience discomfort. I say, PROVE IT!

The only way to know if coffee, chocolate, (or any other comfort food) bothers your bladder is to do your own research! How? Complete a voiding diary for a few days, WITH COFFEE AND CHOCOLATE, in your diet. Then, keep the same diary and avoid drinking and/or eating either for a week!

If your voiding diary shows that you urinate less and/or are in less pain when you're not consuming them, then they are clearly irritating you! Do you need any more evidence than that?

## ***Smoking***

*Many patients feel that smoking makes their symptoms worse. How the by-products of tobacco that are excreted in the urine affect IC / PBS is unknown. Smoking, however, is the major known cause of bladder cancer. Therefore, one of the best things smokers can do for their bladder and their overall health is to quit.*