Eating with IC

Conquering IC. Changing Lives.

Interstitial Cystitis Association
Research about the effect of diet on interstitial cystitis, or IC, is limited. But, many people with IC report that certain foods appear to irritate their bladder. And, they find that changing what they eat and drink can help control IC symptoms and flare-ups.
What things can bother people with IC?

Research links a handful of foods and drinks to IC flare-ups, including:

- Coffee, tea, soda, alcohol, and citrus juices including cranberry juice.
- Foods and drinks with artificial sweeteners (aspartame and saccharin).
- Hot peppers and spicy food.
- Some foods with high potassium levels, like bananas, chocolate, and oranges.
However, there appears to be great individual variation in the effect of foods and drinks on IC symptoms. How much, how often, and the specific combination of foods and drinks varies for each person. Also, some fresh foods that bother you may not cause a flare-up when they are cooked. For example, though a fresh apple may irritate your bladder, you may be able to enjoy applesauce.

Many people with IC note worsening of symptoms with foods, drinks, medicines, and supplements containing preservatives, artificial ingredients, colors, and monosodium glutamate (MSG). Flares may occur within minutes of eating or drinking a trigger item, or may occur hours or days later.

Some IC patients have additional symptoms caused by food allergies, including sensitivities to wheat, corn, rye, oats, and barley. Other patients with milk allergies and lactose intolerance may experience a bad response to these foods. Women with vulvodynia may need to avoid foods high in oxalates. Talk with your healthcare provider about any food intolerances and potential cross reactions.
Discovering which foods and beverages to restrict can be a lengthy process.

To determine your personal trigger foods, use this list of the least to most bothersome foods, or download a copy at www.ichelp.org/ICFoodList:

**BLADDER FRIENDLY** includes foods that rarely bother even the most sensitive IC bladders. If you are newly diagnosed, eat those 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. Start with a small quantity and see how you do.

**CAUTION** includes foods which trigger bladder discomfort. Try these foods only if your bladder is no longer sensitive.
Hints for Determining Your Trigger Foods

Don’t be afraid to eat.
There are many foods that you can eat with IC that will not bother your bladder.

When trying a risky food, start with smaller quantities.
Try ½ a piece of fruit or a dash of spice. See how your body responds and if you do well with that food, then try gradually increasing the quantity.

Figure out what brands you can eat.
Many “brands” of the same food may have completely different ingredients and additives. Before giving up on a specific food, try different brands.

Become a label-reader.
Take a minute to double check the ingredients in packaged foods.
How Do I Figure Out What I Can Eat and Drink?

1. Keep an OK food and symptom diary while you are experimenting with your diet.

2. Ask your healthcare provider about foods that may compromise the effectiveness of medicines and other treatments.

3. Don’t be afraid to eat. There are many foods that you can eat that will not bother your bladder. Most IC patients find they can add to their personal OK food list as their symptoms improve. Some may even be able to occasionally consume foods from the Caution list.

4. 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.

5. When possible, shop for fresh foods. 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.

6. Many “brands” of the same food have completely different additives. Before giving up on a specific food, you might want to try different brands.

7. Pre-existing food allergies, such as an allergy to nuts or corn, can also trigger bladder irritation and, possibly, a stronger allergic reaction. If you are allergic to specific foods, avoid these foods even if they are listed below.
Dining out

When you are eating at restaurants or social gatherings, ask about ingredients and stay away from dishes where ingredients are hard to discern. Spicy ethnic foods can pose a problem when dining out. The ingredients in these dishes are often difficult to determine. Before ordering, ask your waiter what spices are used in particular dishes.

Least to Most Bothersome Food List

Please review the foods and drinks that many IC patients report least bothersome (Bladder Friendly), okay to eat (Try It), and most bothersome (Caution).

The list is not a dietary guideline or a meal plan, but rather a guide to assist you in determining problem and non-problem foods. For more information on IC and diet, go to www.ichelp.org/ICDiet.
### Beverages

#### Bladder Friendly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Test one that works for you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juice</td>
<td>Blueberry, pear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk, Milk Substitutes</td>
<td>Almond, rice, Lactaid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milkshake</td>
<td>Vanilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>Chamomile, peppermint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Dairy Creamers</td>
<td>Check label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggnog</td>
<td>Non-alcoholic, without problem ingredients</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Try It

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juice</td>
<td>Low-acid orange, grape, some apple, baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Herbal, low-acid decaf, roasted carob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>Alfalfa, roasted carob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soda</td>
<td>Root beer with ice (decaffeinated, not diet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Drinks</td>
<td>Test to find one that works for you (e.g., blue Gatorade®)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Caution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Not recommended with many IC medicines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Carbonated, vitamin, flavored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juice</td>
<td>Cranberry, orange, acai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Chocolate, soy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Regular, decaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teas</td>
<td>Regular, green, herbal, iced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodas</td>
<td>Cola, citrus, orange, diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drink Powders</td>
<td>Such as Kool-aid®, lemonade, orange, or powdered ice tea drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Drinks</td>
<td>Guarana, mate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**GRAINS**

**BREADS** – corn bread, oat bread, pita, potato bread, white bread, Italian sweet bread, whole wheat bread

**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**

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**BLADDER FRIENDLY**

**TRY IT**

**BREADS** – rye, sourdough

**CEREALS** – instant packaged hot cereal

**CRACKERS** – without problem ingredients

**GRAIN** – amaranth

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**CAUTION**

**BREADS** – 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
Fats & Nuts

Bladder Friendly

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

Try It

Nuts – macadamia, pecans, walnuts
Mayonnaise
Tahini
Seeds – sunflower seeds
Shortening – butter-flavored

Caution

Nuts – filberts, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios
Oils – check label
Salad dressings – most

If you have nut or other food allergies, talk with your healthcare provider about your special diet needs.
**EGGS, MEAT, FISH, & POULTRY**

### EGGS

POULTRY – chicken, turkey

### FISH

BEEF

### SEAFOOD

SEAFOOD – clams, crabmeat (not canned), lobster, shrimp

LAMB

PORK

### PROTEIN POWDER

PROTEIN POWDER – whey, egg white

VEAL

LIVER – beef or chicken

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### TRY IT

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

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### CAUTION

CURED MEATS – bologna, pepperoni, salami, canned crab meat, hot dogs, sausage

SMOKED FISH

SOY PRODUCTS – soy veggie patties, protein powder, tofu
### DAIRY, CHEESES, & FROZEN DESSERTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLADDER FRIENDLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHEESES – American, mozzarella, cheddar (mild), feta, ricotta, string cheeses, cream cheese, cottage cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICE CREAM – most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILK SUBSTITUTES – Lactaid®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHERBET – no citrus or chocolate flavors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHIPPED CREAM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRY IT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHEESES – blue cheese, brie, brick, parmesan, camembert, cheddar (sharp), edam, emmenthaler, gruyere hard jack, Monterey Jack, parmesan (fresh and canned), Roquefort, stilton, Swiss buttermilk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUR CREAM – accent on a baked potato or soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIZZA – plain, chicken and garlic, veggie, made with white sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SORBET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOGURT – blueberry, vanilla, plain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHEESES – processed, CheezWhiz®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICE CREAM – citrus or chocolate flavors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOY PRODUCTS – soy milk, soy cheeses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIZZA – pepperoni</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### FRUITS

#### BLADDER FRIENDLY
- **APPLIES** – Gala, Fuji, Pink Lady
- **APPLESAUCE** – homemade with Gala, Fuji, or Pink Lady apples
- **BLUEBERRIES**
- **COCONUT** – without preservatives
- **DATES** – without preservatives
- **PEARS**
- **WATERMELON**

#### TRY IT
- **APPLESAUCE** – commercial or baby
- **APRICOTS**
- **BANANAS**
- **BERRIES** – blackberries, raspberries, olallieberries, cherimoya
- **CHERRIES** – fresh, maraschino
- **CITRUS PEELS**
- **CURRANTS**
- **FIGS**
- **MANGO**
- **MELON** – Crenshaw, honeydew
- **PEACHES**
- **PLUMS**
- **RAISINS** – brown
- **RHUBARB**

#### CAUTION
- **BERRIES** – cranberries
- **CITRUS** – lemons, limes, oranges, grapefruit
- **DRIED FRUIT** – with preservatives
- **GRAPES**
- **GUAVA**
- **KIWI FRUIT**
- **MELONS** – cantaloupe
- **NECTARINES**
- **PASSION FRUIT**
- **PAPAYA**
- **PERSIMMON**
- **PINEAPPLE**
- **STARFRUIT**
- **STRAWBERRIES**
- **RAISINS** – golden
# Vegetables & Dried Beans

## Bladder Friendly

- Asparagus
- Avocado
- Beans – black eyed peas, garbanzo, lentils, pinto, white, most dried beans
- Beets
- Broccoli
- Brussels Sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Chives
- Corn
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Green Beans
- Greens – collard greens, kale, mustard greens, okra, swiss chard, spinach, bok choy
- Lettuce and Most Salad Greens
- Mushrooms
- Olives – black
- Parsley
- Peas – green, snow peas, split peas
- Bell Peppers – yellow, orange, red
- Potatoes – white, yams
- Pumpkin
- Radishes
- Rhubarb
- Rutabaga
- Squash – summer, winter, zucchini
- Turnips

## CAUTION

- Beans – fava, kidney beans, lima beans, black beans
- Bell Peppers – green
- Olives – green
- Greens – chicory, dandelion greens, purslane, turnip greens

## Try It

- Chili Peppers
- Onions – raw bulb onions
- Pickles
- Sauerkraut
- Leeks (Cooked)
- Onions – white, red, cooked bulb onion, raw green
- Tomatoes – homegrown, low acid
- Watercress
- Soy Beans – edamame, roasted
- Tomato – tomato sauces, tomato juice
- Tofu
**SNACKS**

**BLADDER FRIENDLY**
- **ALMONDS**
- **CARROTS**
- **CELERY**
- **CHIPS** – corn, potato (plain)
- **CRACKERS** – soda or soup
- **FRUIT BARS** – blueberry, pear
- **MILKSHAKE** – vanilla
- **OATMEAL BARS**
- **PEANUTS**
- **PEANUT BUTTER**
- **POPCORN**
- **PRETZELS** – plain

**TRY IT**
- **DONUTS** – glazed, old fashioned
- **GRAHAM CRACKERS**
- **FRUIT AND NUT BARS** – with safe ingredients
- **LICORICE**
- **PIZZA** – plain, chicken and garlic, veggie, made with white sauce

**CAUTION**
- **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
- **PIZZA** – pepperoni
- **DESSERTS** – with problem nuts
- **FRUITCAKES**
SOUPS

BLADDER FRIENDLY

HOMEMADE SOUP AND STOCK – from okay meats and vegetables

TRY IT

SOUPS – canned, low sodium, organic soups (without problem ingredients)

CAUTION

BOUILLON – cubes, powder
CANNED – most
PACKAGED SOUPS – most
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLADDER FRIENDLY</th>
<th>TRY IT</th>
<th>CAUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALLSPICE</td>
<td>DILL</td>
<td>ASCORBIC ACID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALMOND EXTRACT</td>
<td>FENNEL</td>
<td>AUTOLOYZED YEAST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANISE</td>
<td>GARLIC</td>
<td>BHA AND BHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASIL</td>
<td>MACE</td>
<td>BENZOATES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARAWAY SEED</td>
<td>MARJORAM</td>
<td>CATSUP (ketchup)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORIANDER</td>
<td>OREGANO</td>
<td>CAYENNE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSEMARY</td>
<td>POPPY SEED</td>
<td>CLOVES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAGE</td>
<td>ROSEMARY</td>
<td>MUSTARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SALT (in small quantities)</td>
<td>SAGE</td>
<td>OLEORESIN PAPRIKA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THYME</td>
<td>SALT (in small quantities)</td>
<td>PAPRIKA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TARRAGON</td>
<td>SALT</td>
<td>PICKLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VANILLA EXTRACT</td>
<td>SALT</td>
<td>RED PEPPER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SALT</td>
<td>SOY SAUCE</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TAMARI</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VINEGAR</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MSG – monosodium glutamate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>METABISULFITES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SULFITES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIBER SUPPLEMENTS

BLADDER FRIENDLY

ACACIA FIBER
BENEFIBER®
METAMUCIL® – plain psyllium
BULK PSYLLIUM FIBER – not sugar free

TRY IT

COLACE®
METAMUCIL® – cinnamon wafers

CAUTION

METAMUCIL® – orange, berry burst
PSYLLIUM FIBER – sugar-free due to the presence of artificial sweeteners
SENNA
DESSERTS & SWEETS

BLADDER FRIENDLY

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

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

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
About the ICA

The Interstitial Cystitis Association (ICA) is the only non-profit charitable organization dedicated to improving the quality of healthcare and lives of people living with interstitial cystitis (IC).

Mission

Conquering IC. Changing Lives. The ICA provides advocacy, research funding, and education to ensure early diagnosis and optimal care with dignity for people affected by IC.

contact

email: icamail@ichelp.org
web: www.ichelp.org
address: 1760 Old Meadow Road, Suite 500 McLean, VA 22102

Help us fund our greatest need. Contribute online at www.ichelp.org/annualfund

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