

Interstitial Cystitis/Bladder Pain Syndrome Fact Sheet

Urology Care
FOUNDATION™
*The Official Foundation of the
American Urological Association*

WHAT IS INTERSTITIAL CYSTITIS (IC) OR BLADDER PAIN SYNDROME (BPS)?

Interstitial cystitis (IC) or bladder pain syndrome (BPS) is a long-term problem with bladder pain. It is not an infection, but it can feel like one. It's aching pressure in the bladder area. This pressure or pain can last for 6 weeks or more with no clear cause. There can also be signs like a regular, urgent need to use the bathroom.

Everyday life with IC/BPS can be very hard. However, there are treatments available so that you shouldn't feel bladder pain. You can work with your health care provider to find relief.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS OF IC/BPS?

Experts don't know exactly what causes IC/BPS, but there are many ideas. It could be from:

- Something in the urine that damages the bladder
- White blood cells which cause an allergic reaction
- Changes in the nerves that carry bladder sensations
- Something that causes the immune system to attack the bladder
- A family history of painful bladder

The most common symptom of IC/BPS is pain in the lower abdomen or lower back. It can get worse as the bladder fills. Women may also feel pain in the vulva or vagina. Men may feel pain in the scrotum, testicle or penis. Another problem is urinary frequency (needing to visit the bathroom more than

seven times day and night). Some people feel the need to go to the bathroom all the time. Some people also have bowel problems.

HOW IS IC/BPS DIAGNOSED?

There is no medical test that says a person has IC/BPS or not. Your health care provider will first decide if your symptoms seem like IC/BPS. Next, they'll test to see if an infection or something else is causing your symptoms. When no other serious issues are found, your doctor may then diagnose you with IC/BPS.

HOW IS IC/BPS TREATED?

The goal of IC/BPS treatment is to control your symptoms. A combination of lifestyle changes and medical options should be tried until you find relief. However, these steps can take a long time until you feel better so patience is encouraged. You may be given the name of a specialist/urologist who is an expert in IC/BPS.

- **Lifestyle Changes or Behavioral Therapy.** These may include physical therapy, stress reduction and dietary changes. Some foods and beverages can irritate the bladder and should be limited. These include citrus, tomatoes, coffee, chocolate, spicy foods and alcohol. Kegel exercises are not recommended if you have IC/BPS. Kegels may make your pelvic floor pain worse.
- **Prescription Drugs.** If lifestyle changes don't help enough, your provider may offer one or more prescription drugs. Sometimes herbal supplements are recommended.
- **Ulcer Cauterization.** Surgery may be done to find and treat ulcers.

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- **Neuromodulation Therapy and Injections.** This group of treatments delivers electrical impulses to nerves to change how they work.
- **Injections of Botox®.** Botox® can control symptoms by paralyzing muscles to reduce how often you go to the bathroom.
- **Additional Surgery.** Additional surgery is only offered when there are major bladder symptoms and other treatment options haven't helped.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER:

- What treatment plan do you recommend for me and why?
- How long will this process take?
- Will IC/BPS affect other parts of my body?
- Will I be able to feel less pain with treatment?
- How can I avoid pain in the future?
- Are there other drugs I can take to help manage my IC/BPS?
- Where can I go for more information and support?

ABOUT UROLOGY CARE FOUNDATION

The Urology Care Foundation is the world's leading urologic Foundation—and the official Foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make healthy changes in their lives. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts.

To learn more about different urologic issues visit **UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions**. Go to **UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist** to find a doctor near you.

DISCLAIMER

This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please talk to your urologist or health care provider about your health concerns. Always consult a health care provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications.

For copies of printed materials about undescended testicle and other urologic conditions, visit **UrologyHealth.org/Order** or call 800-828-7866.

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