



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Interstitial cystitis (IC) is a chronic bladder disorder. Symptoms are similar to cystitis (an infection of the urinary tract), but no infection is found. Hunner's ulcer is a rare, and more severe, form of IC.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Symptoms vary greatly for each person.
- Pelvic pain and a feeling of pressure.
- Urgent need to urinate day and night (up to 40 times a day). This also causes sleep problems.
- Bladder does not feel like it empties completely when you urinate.
- Pain during sexual intercourse.
- Burning when urinating.
- Vaginal and rectal pain.

CAUSES

The lining (or wall) of the bladder breaks down. Urine stored in the bladder irritates the damaged lining and it becomes red and sore. Why the lining breaks down is not known. Medical tests find no bacteria or virus infection. There actually may be several causes, or there may be different disorders, rather than just one.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Having allergies (such as to drugs or food).
- Hay fever or asthma.
- Rheumatoid arthritis, lupus (immune disorders).
- Certain bowel or urinary problems.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

None known.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Treatments can help control or relieve the symptoms, but they do not cure the disorder. It may take time to find the treatments that work best for you.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- The symptoms may come and go over days, weeks, or months, sometimes years, even with treatment.
- Chronic symptoms can lead to problems with your work, friends, family, and sexual activity.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- There are a number of medical problems that cause similar symptoms. They include kidney stones, urinary or vaginal infection, cancer, and others. Your health care provider will perform tests to rule out these other causes of the symptoms.
- A physical exam will be performed and urine tests are needed to check for infection. A cystoscopy can con-

firm the diagnosis. In this test, a thin, tube-like device with a light is used to see inside the bladder. The test can be uncomfortable because the bladder is stretched. A drug (anesthetic) will be used to stop pain. A stretched bladder holds more urine so this test helps symptoms also.

- There are a variety of treatment options. It is important to find out what works for you.
- Bladder instillation (a bladder wash or bath) is done at the medical office. It involves stretching the bladder by filling it with a solution for about 15 minutes.
- Bladder training involves teaching yourself to urinate at certain times.
- Counseling or behavior training. Learn how to relax and cope with stress, anxiety, or depression.
- A TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) device uses mild electric pulses to help block pain.
- Surgery is rarely needed. It may be done as a last resort when other methods have failed.
- Don't smoke. Smoking makes symptoms worse.
- Learn about the disorder. Consider a support group.
- To learn more: The Interstitial Cystitis Association (ICA), 51 Monroe St, Suite 1402, Rockville, MD 20850; (800) 435-7422; website: www.ichelp.org.

MEDICATIONS

- You may use nonprescription pain relievers.
- Pentosan polysulfate, brand name Elmiron, may be prescribed. It is used for treating interstitial cystitis.
- Other drugs may be prescribed for depression, anxiety, sleep problems, and severe pain.

ACTIVITY

- No limits other than those caused by the symptoms.
- Regular exercise helps some patients feel better.

DIET

Diet changes help some patients. Avoid drinks with caffeine, alcohol, or artificial sweeteners; spicy foods, chocolate, soda/carbonated beverages, citrus fruits, and tomatoes.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of interstitial cystitis.
- Treatment is not helping the pain or other symptoms.
- New symptoms occur. Drugs may cause side effects.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page