

Painful Bladder Syndrome: Interstitial Cystitis

Painful Bladder Syndrome/Interstitial Cystitis (PBS/IC) is a chronic medical condition. The most common symptoms are urinary urgency, frequency and bladder pain. These symptoms often occur with episodes of increased intensity called “flares”. Often, people confuse the symptoms of PBS/IC with a urinary tract infection

The exact cause of PBS/IC is unknown. It is thought that defects in the bladder lining lead to nerve dysfunction. People often see multiple healthcare providers before it is diagnosed. There is no cure for PBS/IC but multiple treatment options are available to improve the symptoms. It will take patience and determination to find out which combination of treatment options will work the best for you.

Long-term Treatment Options:

- Bladder friendly diet (IC diet) – a way of finding out which foods and beverages worsen your symptoms so that you can eliminate them from your diet.
- Prelief™ – a dietary supplement that decreases the acidity of urine (available at certain drug stores and on the internet).
- Pelvic floor physical therapy – a variety of techniques used to calm the nerves and muscles in the pelvis. This usually requires 6 to 12 weekly or biweekly visits to a pelvic floor physical therapist.
- Elmiron™ (pentosan polysulfate) – medication that repairs defects in the bladder lining after 3 to 6 months.
- Antihistamines – for people who experience an increase in PBS/IC symptoms related to seasons.
- Antidepressants that have pain-relieving properties.
- Anticonvulsants that have pain-relieving properties.
- InterStim™ Therapy – A nerve stimulator for the bladder that is surgically implanted beneath the skin to help nerves in the pelvis to function more normally.
- Nerve blocks – long-acting pain medications are injected into nerves by a pain management specialist.
- BOTOX® - a form of nerve blockage injected into the bladder by your urologist.
- Psychotherapy – Psychotherapists can offer expertise in coping with the impact of chronic pelvic pain on your quality of life and intimate relationships, if needed.

Short-term Treatment Options (for flares):

- Application of a heating pad or ice pack to the area of pain.
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs - such as Motrin, Advil, or Aleve. Not recommended for long-term use.
- Urinary analgesics - such as Uribel, Pyridium, or Azo-Standard. Not recommended for long-term use.
- Bladder instillations – instillation of a special combination of relieving medications into bladder.
- Bladder Hydrodistention – stretching of the bladder under sedation can provide pain relief

At Female Urology of Nashville, we do not routinely prescribe narcotic medications for PBS/IC as they do not effectively improve visceral pain.