

GUIDES

Interstitial Cystitis

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Interstitial Cystitis Definition

Chronic inflammation of the bladder. Symptoms are very similar to UTI, lower abdominal/subpubic/perineal pain, urinary frequency and urgency. The etiology is not fully understood, however there are several hypotheses. The pathogenesis and thus treatment is based around the idea that this condition is related to Leaky Bladder Syndrome (like leaky gut), where the lining/epithelium becomes compromised, which involves an inflammatory process that affects bladder smooth muscle and sensory nerve input/output resulting in the symptom picture of pain and urgency. There are changes in the glycosaminoglycan component of the bladder lining, urine penetrates the bladder wall, which causes tissue irritation and injury, mast cell activation and thus inflammation.

Interstitial Cystitis Root Cause Considerations

MOLD!

- One of the signs of toxic mold exposure is chronic bladder infections/inflammation. Think ochratoxin A.

Autoimmune/Immune Mediated

- Mast Cell Activation is definitely involved in this condition, so looking at TH1/TH2 Balance and Stealth Infections. Most autoimmunity leans towards TH2. High estrogen can worsen histamine.

Digestive System Challenges

- Many of these patients have had multiple rounds of antibiotics prior to proper diagnosis, thus will have major issues within their digestive tracts.
- Most often there is Imbalanced Microbiome and inflammation within the Digestive Tract: Parasites, Candida, pathogenic Biofilms that must be treated to affect overall immune balance and function
- Leaky Gut: If there is a leaky bladder there is often a leaky gut as well. So here you want to work with short term Elimination of food sensitivities, healing the gut lining and addressing chronic gut infections and chronic stress which are root causes of Leaky Gut.

Neurological

- There have been some studies that have found increased Grey Matter Volume in the brain resulting in increased sensitivity to pain.

Increase in sensory afferent fibers by upregulation (meaning there is stronger signals going from the bladder to the brain)

Emotional Processing/Trauma

- There is a high association of Depression and Anxiety in patients with IC.
- The Root and Sacral Chakras have to do with our sense of safety, security, belonging, creativity and self expression, so often there are themes in the energy/emotional realms within individuals struggling with IC. The Root is related to the mastery of our Physical Body, the Sacral is related to our Mastery of our Emotional Body, and everyone pretty much has room to grow in these regards.
- Often there is a history of sexual trauma (whether significant or even just issues with boundaries/consent).

Relationships/Sexual Partners

- Always important with recurrent pelvic inflammation/issues to look at the partner, imbalanced flora/relational issues (emotions/safety/intimacy) with partner can be a major contributing factor.

Fibrosis

- From Chronic Inflammation, Recurrent UTIs or long term untreated STIs.

IC Holistic Solutions

Full Work Up to Rule Out Differential Diagnosis

- UTI/Cystitis: Urine Dipstick and Culture to rule out infection
- U/A should have no positives for a diagnosis of IC
- Gynecological Conditions:
 - Vaginitis: Vaginal Swab to assess for infection
 - Endometriosis: Can have endometrial growth on the bladder causing the symptoms.
- Imaging: All Normal/negative
- Rule out urinary diverticulum or congenital malformations
- Diagnosis is made via Cystoscopy, to rule out bladder cancer. Rarely there are visible ulcerations (5-10% cases). There is also often a higher tendency towards bleeding (increased permeability of mucosal capillaries)

Helpful Labs

- Stool Panel, Food Sensitivity Panel (IgG, IgA, IgG4 ideally), Mycotoxin Testing, OAT Panel, they also have really in depth microbial testing for urinary pathogens now.

Anti-Inflammatory Diet

- Whatever diet is most beneficial varies between individuals. Some do really well on diets such as Autoimmune Paleo, others Low FODMAPS/Gaps, and others with Vegan/Plant-Based or short (1 month) mostly Raw Fruit/Veggie/Juicing etc Cleanses. So this is where you will want to work with your practitioner to decide the best diet for your individual case and constitution.
- Caffeine, Spicy Foods, Alcohol, Citrus and Tomatoes are commonly known to aggravate. These are highly acidic foods which increase the acidity of the urine.
- Reducing and ideally eliminating added processed sugars
- Often Bone Broth (along as you are not high histamine), Fermented Foods, and Higher Fiber is beneficial

Optimize Drainage Pathways/ Parasite Cleansing/Address Chronic Infections

Acupuncture/Cranial Sacral Therapy: Excellent results in research studies for Acupuncture

Stress Management/Emotional Healing

- Combination of daily tending to the emotional body and nervous system, and focused work on unwinding deep subconscious patterns related to trauma and self love.
- Vagal Tone Practices, Meditation, Breathwork
- Holistic Counseling/Intuitive/Spiritual Healing
- Cellular Release Therapy, Shamanic Plant Medicine Ceremony/Supervised Microdosing
- For females, Yoni Steaming and Yoni Eggs can be really powerful tools for unwinding pelvic tension/pain/trauma.

Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy/Bladder Retraining

Helpful Supplements

- Vitanica Bladder Ease: great combo specifically designed for IC.

- **Restore Mucosal Layer/Support Cell Membranes:** N-Acetyl Glucosamine, Glutamine, Phosphatidylcholine (Lecithin, prefer sunflower to soy in most cases), Chondroitin.
- **Methylation Support:** MSM, SAmE, B12, Folate
- Probiotics
- D-Mannose Powder
- **Inflammation Support/Mast Cell Stabilizers:** B5, Iodine, Seeking Health HistaminX, Vital Nutrients BCQ
- **L-Arginine:** Increases production of Nitric Oxide, which can help with relaxing smooth muscle, is also immune supportive and antibacterial.
- **Bioflavonoids:** Quercetin
- **Melatonin:** reduces oxidative stress, which then has been shown to reduce bladder symptoms and tissue damage.
- Binders!!

Helpful Botanicals (For Bladder, Teas are often more effective than Tinctures)

- **Kava Kava Root:** Particularly when combined with Bladder Ease, one of the most effective bladder pain remedies. Best for acute use rather than long term.
- **Demulcent Herbs:** Althea officinalis (Marshmallow Root) Cold Infusion, Zea Mays (Corn Silk), Avena Sativa (Milky Oats).
- **Antimicrobial/Anti Inflammatory:** Uva Ursi, Goldenseal, Oregon Grape
- Often there is associated **depression/anxiety** so herbs like St. John's Wort, Passionflower, Valerian, Gotu Kola etc are often helpful.
- **Mast Cell Stabilizing Herbs:** Scutellaria baicalensis (Chinese Skullcap), Perilla, Feverfew, Dong Quai, Nettles.
- Aloe Vera (given as freeze dried whole leaf concentrate): 600 mg capsules given twice a day for 3 months and showed significant symptom relief in 7/12 patients.

Homeopathic Drainage

- UNDA/Gemmotherapy can be really helpful!

References:

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