

# Bladder and Urinary Tract Pain from Treatment



## *Question:*

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My chemotherapy has caused burning in my bladder and urinary tract. It is so painful that I cannot continue chemotherapy until this is resolved. What diet changes will help relieve this burning, or make my urine more alkaline? Would more alkaline urine help relieve the burning?

## *Answer:*

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Always talk to your health care team prior to making any changes to your diet or dietary supplements you are using. It is also beneficial to communicate any treatment-related side effects to your health care team.

### **Possible help from another bladder condition**

Bladder damage is a known side effect from chemotherapy. Some chemotherapy drugs break down substances that irritate the lining of the bladder thus causing inflammation, burning, and bleeding. Interstitial cystitis (IC) is a bladder condition that also leads to painful bladder symptoms and burning. Even though the cause of your bladder pain is different from IC, it may help you to avoid some of the same foods and beverages that cause problems for people with IC. A diet that reduces your intake of foods and beverages that can irritate the bladder is the goal.

The Interstitial Cystitis Network recommends avoiding:

- Caffeine: tea, coffee, chocolate, soda
- Carbonated beverages
- Alcohol
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Fruits: oranges, grapefruits, lemons, limes
- Vegetables: tomatoes and tomato products
- Spicy foods: hot peppers, horseradish
- Mega doses of vitamins and supplements
- Aged cheeses: cheddar, brie, Gouda
- Artificial sweeteners

### **Ways to understand your chemotherapy-related bladder pain**

Studies have found variations among patients on how much, how often, and how specific combinations of foods alleviate symptoms. It would be helpful to keep a food and symptom diary to record all foods, beverages, medications, and supplements, and any symptoms you notice after consuming these items. This can help you to identify your own potential bladder irritants. It can potentially take weeks or months for the bladder to heal.

You may want to consult with a Registered Dietitian (RD) for assistance with diet planning. He or she can help you by:

- Identifying which diet changes may make a difference to reduce symptoms
- Making sure that your diet is balanced and nutritionally complete

### **Other options**

There is limited research on the effect of dietary supplements on cystitis and flares. Ask your healthcare team, including an RD, if the specific dietary supplement is safe and if it may be helpful for you.

### **Additional Resources**

The following resources may provide additional information on managing bladder pain. Even though these focus on IC, some of the changes to eliminate bladder irritants from the diet may be helpful for you too:

- Interstitial Cystitis Diet Confident Choices® – a website developed by an RD with reliable information about nutrition and diet for people with IC, along with a very helpful newsletter (<http://www.ic-diet.com>)
- Interstitial Cystitis Association (<https://www.ichelp.org>)
- The Interstitial Cystitis Network (<https://www.ic-network.com>)
- National Kidney & Urologic Disorder Information Clearinghouse (<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/urologic-diseases/interstitial-cystitis-painful-bladder-syndrome>)
- Multiple cookbooks available at your local bookstore or online

## *References, Websites, and Resources:*

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3. Chemocare.com
4. National Cancer Institute ([www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov))

The original question and answer were generously donated by Diana Dyer, MS, RD, a cancer survivor, registered dietitian, organic garlic farmer, and the author of "A Dietitian's Cancer Story: Information & Inspiration for Recovery & Healing from a 3-time Cancer Survivor."

Question and Answer updated by Tiffany Barrett on behalf of the ON DPG

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