



Interstitial Cystitis

Natural Remedies for Bladder Irritation and Inflammation

Interstitial cystitis is a chronic inflammation of the space between the lining of the urinary bladder and the bladder muscle. It is a progressive disease which can lead to tiny ulcerations and eventually to a scarring of the bladder. It is most common in women. People with this condition tend to experience frequent burning urination. It can also make sexual intercourse painful. In interstitial cystitis, urine is typically cloudy with a foul odor. There is a breakdown of the bladder tissue and atrophy of bladder function.

Inflammation of the bladder may be due to a urinary tract infection (UTI), which may or may not be present with interstitial cystitis. About one in twenty women with a UTI have interstitial cystitis. This condition can be frustrating to diagnose and treat because the person has the symptoms of a bladder infection, but lab tests return negative results. Since there are no bacteria present, antibiotics do not help.

Interstitial cystitis has been called the “migraine of the bladder.” Many of the same things that either trigger or relieve migraine headaches also affect interstitial cystitis. It may even have an autoimmune component. The causes appear to be environmental toxins, food allergies, and lowered immunity. It is likely that there is “leakiness” or damage to the intestinal membranes and possible yeast infections weakening the immune system. Another very important factor in this condition is the pH of the urine. Chronic over acidity of the urine will irritate the bladder resulting in inflammation.

Women with interstitial cystitis can usually control symptoms of urinary frequency, burning, painful intercourse and pelvic irritation by avoiding high acid-forming foods. Meat, cheese, eggs, fish, most grains and beans, and soda pop are all acid forming foods. Foods should also be avoided that are high in the amino acids tyrosine, tyramine and aspartate. Specifically, the following foods should be avoided as they tend to aggravate this condition: aged protein foods such as yogurt, pickled herring, preserved or smoked meats, cheeses, yeasted breads, sauerkraut, citrus fruits, citrus juices and red wine. Also avoid all caffeine-containing foods, spicy foods, soy sauce, and foods with additives like Nutra Sweet.

Eat more of the alkaline-forming foods. These include most fruits, green leafy vegetables, and non-starchy vegetables like zucchini, celery and broccoli. If symptoms improve, challenge the body occasionally with some acid-forming foods.

It is very important to drink a lot of pure water to help flush

the urinary tract. This is especially important when there is pain. It is also important to alkalize the urine at the first sign of pain. This can be done by taking some magnesium and some coral calcium. It is probably a good idea to take magnesium on a regular basis, but the coral calcium is only a Band-Aid and should not be relied upon for relief as it will cause further imbalances if taken continuously.

There are a number of herbal remedies that can help to reduce the inflammation in the bladder. Soothing diuretics such as cornsilk, nettles, dandelion leaf, asparagus, and watermelon seed are best. Stronger, more stimulating diuretics, such as juniper berry, uva ursi or buchu may not be as effective, and may even aggravate the condition. Watermelon juice can also be used to gently flush the urinary tract.

Goldenseal is an excellent remedy for relieving subacute inflammation in membranes. Take 2 capsules of goldenseal three times daily during acute episodes to reduce inflammation. If there is infection present, goldenseal will also help with the infection. Another good remedy for infection with interstitial cystitis is colloidal silver.

Horsetail is a good remedy for restoring elasticity to tissues and may help with scarring. Zinc will also help to heal tissues and restore immunity.

The best urinary formulas for interstitial cystitis are KB-C and Urinary Maintenance. KB-C is a Chinese formula for a weakened urinary system. Urinary Maintenance contains both magnesium and potassium, which will help to alkalize the urine, and a blend of very gentle, soothing diuretics. K, JP-X and Kidney Drainage Formula should probably be avoided because they all contain juniper, which can aggravate urinary irritation.

It is important to address root causes with this interstitial cystitis. As we mentioned earlier, there are probably imbalances in the intestinal tract that need to be addressed. Probiotic Eleven and Yeast/Fungal Detox can help rid the body of yeast if this is a factor. Kudzu/St. John's wort can help reduce intestinal permeability (gut leakiness). A fiber blend, such as Nature's Three or Psyllium Hulls Combination, can be taken daily to sooth intestinal membranes and absorb toxins.

Selected References

Prescription for Nutritional Healing by James F. Balch and Phyllis A. Balch
The ABC+D Approach to Natural Healing by Tree of Light Publishing
The Encyclopedia of Natural Healing by Siegfried Gursche

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