

# Interstitial Cystitis

## What Is Interstitial Cystitis (Ic)?

Interstitial cystitis (IC) is a part of a spectrum of diseases known as painful bladder syndrome, a chronic condition characterised by bladder pain, pressure, and sometimes pelvic pain. It can significantly affect the quality of life of those affected. The exact cause of IC is unknown, and it is more common in women than men.

## Symptoms

The symptoms of interstitial cystitis can vary greatly between individuals and can fluctuate in severity. Common symptoms include:

- Persistent pelvic pain or pressure.
- A frequent and urgent need to urinate.
- Pain during sexual intercourse.
- Discomfort or pain as the bladder fills.
- Relief of pain after urination.
- In severe cases, the need to urinate may occur up to 60 times a day.

## Treatment Options

There is no one-size-fits-all treatment for interstitial cystitis, and it often involves a combination of therapies. Treatment options include:

### Lifestyle and dietary changes:

- Avoid foods and drinks that can irritate the bladder, such as caffeine, alcohol, spicy foods, and artificial sweeteners.
- Quitting smoking.

### Physical therapy:

- Pelvic floor physical therapy to help relieve muscle tension and improve bladder function.

### Medication:

- Oral medications like pain relievers, antihistamines, or antidepressants.
- Bladder instillations are where medication is placed directly into the bladder.

### Bladder distention:

- Stretching the bladder with water or gas under general anaesthesia can provide relief for some patients.

**Nerve stimulation:**

- Techniques such as transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) or sacral nerve stimulation to reduce pain and urinary frequency.

**Surgery:**

- In rare cases, surgery may be considered to relieve symptoms if other treatments have failed.

## Management Of Ic

The management of interstitial cystitis involves:

**Diagnosis:**

- Initial consultation with a healthcare provider, including a thorough medical history and physical examination.
- Diagnostic tests such as urinalysis, urine culture, cystoscopy, or urodynamic testing.

**Treatment plan:**

- Developing a tailored treatment plan based on the severity of symptoms and individual patient needs.
- Regular follow-up appointments to monitor progress and adjust treatments as necessary.

**Ongoing management:**

- Long-term management of the condition often requires continuous therapy and lifestyle adjustments.
- Education and support from healthcare providers to help manage flare-ups and maintain quality of life.

## Risks Associated With Treatment

The risks associated with interstitial cystitis treatments can vary depending on the type of treatment:

**Medication side effects:**

- Oral medications may cause gastrointestinal upset, dizziness, or allergic reactions.
- Bladder instillations can cause temporary discomfort or urinary tract infections.

**Surgical risks:**

- As with any surgery, there are risks of infection, bleeding, and complications from anaesthesia.

**Nerve stimulation risks:**

- Potential discomfort or infection at the site of nerve stimulator implantation.

## Recovery

Recovery from interstitial cystitis treatment is an ongoing process:

### **Symptom management:**

- Patients often need to manage their symptoms long-term with a combination of treatments.
- Flare-ups may still occur and will need to be managed promptly.

### **Lifestyle changes:**

- Patients may need to make permanent lifestyle and dietary changes to control symptoms.
- Regular physical therapy may be required to maintain pelvic floor health.

### **Support and education:**

- Education and ongoing support from your urologist and GP is essential
- Support groups or counselling may be beneficial for coping with the emotional aspects of the condition.

Recovery involves regular monitoring and adjustment of treatments to ensure the best possible quality of life for individuals with interstitial cystitis.

## Why Choose Birmingham Urology Centre

At Birmingham Urology Centre, our experienced urologists provide comprehensive evaluation and treatment for interstitial cystitis. We use the latest diagnostic tools and techniques to ensure accurate diagnosis and effective treatment plans tailored to your needs.

**Contact us** today to book an appointment or for more information on interstitial cystitis and treatment options.