



Brigham Urogynecology Group

Dietary Bladder Irritants to the Bladder

What is a bladder irritant?

A bladder irritant is any food, drink, or medication that causes the bladder to be irritated. Irritation can cause frequency (needing to urinate more often than normal), urgency (the sense of needing to urinate), bladder spasms, and even bladder pain. Bladder spasms can lead to urine leakage if there is a sudden urge, but not enough time to reach a toilet.

What are some examples of bladder irritants?

The following is a list of bladder irritants. The seven MOST IRRITATING are listed first:

*All alcoholic beverages	*Cigarettes/Tobacco	*Cola drinks	*Tea
*Artificial Sweeteners	*Chocolate	*Coffee	

Other possible irritants include:

Fruits (and their juices):

cranberries, grapes, oranges, lemons,
peaches, pineapple, plums, apples, and cantaloupe

Vegetables: onions, tomatoes, chilies, peppers

Milk/Dairy: aged cheese, sour cream, yogurt

Grains: rye & sourdough breads

Seasonings: spices & spicy food, especially peppers, acidic foods and beverages, walnuts & peanuts, vinegar

How do I change my diet?

You should start by eliminating, or at least cutting down, on the top seven irritants: coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate, alcohol, artificial sweeteners and cigarettes. You should allow at least two weeks without the food or drink before noticing any change in your bladder control. The proof that the food or drink is causing irritation is frequency and urgency that returns when the food or drink is restarted.

Can I substitute any foods?

Yes, there are substitutes readily available. Suggested substitutes include:

Herbal tea without citrus, weakly brewed tea

Melons (except cantaloupe)

White chocolate

Pine nuts, almonds, or cashews

Acid-free coffee & tea (call 1-800-TEALEAF for more info)

Caffeine-Free, Herbal coffee & tea

(Please turn over for detailed list of dietary bladder irritants)

Handout adapted from Interstitial Cystitis Association web site, <http://www.ichelp.org>

Bladder Irritant and Dietary Guidelines

Food Groups:	Keep Away From:	Substitute With:
Milk/Dairy Products:	Aged cheese, sour cream, yogurt and chocolate.	White chocolate. Non-aged cheese such as cottage or American. Frozen yogurt and milk.
Vegetables:	Fava beans, lima beans, onions, tofu, soybeans and store bought tomatoes.	Other vegetables and home grown tomatoes (which may be less acidic).
Fruits:	Apples, apricots, avocados, bananas, cantaloupes, citrus fruits, cranberries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pineapples, plums, pomegranates, rhubarb, strawberries and fruit juices.	Melons (other than cantaloupes), blueberries and pears.
Carbohydrates & Grains:	Rye and sourdough bread.	Other breads, pasta, potatoes and rice.
Meats & Fish:	Aged, canned, cured, processed, or smoked meats and fish. Food containing nitrates or nitrites such as anchovies, caviar, chicken livers, corned beef, and meats.	Other poultry, fish and meat.
Nuts:	Most nuts.	Almonds, cashews and pine nuts.
Beverages:	Alcoholic beverages. Carbonated drinks such as sodas. Coffee or tea. Fruit juices, especially citrus or cranberry juice.	Non-carbonated bottled water. Some herbal teas. Decaffeinated, acid-free coffee & tea (Call 1-800-TEALEAF for more information). Teeccino's herbal coffee & tea.
Seasonings:	Mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, salsa, soy sauce, and miso. Salad dressing and vinegar, including balsamic and flavored vinegars. Spicy foods, which includes Chinese, Indian, Mexican and Thai.	Garlic and other seasonings.
Preservatives & Additives:	Benzol alcohol, citric acid, monosodium glutamate (MSG), artificial sweeteners such as aspartame (Nutrasweet®) and saccharine. Foods containing preservatives and artificial ingredients and colors.	
Miscellaneous:	Tobacco, caffeine, diet pills, junk foods, and recreational drugs. Cold and allergy medications containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine. Certain vitamins (Vitamin C, B-Complex vitamins, multivitamins).	Vitamin A, D and E. Calcium and magnesium.

➤ Handout adapted from Interstitial Cystitis Association web site, <http://www.ichelp.org>

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