

Interstitial Cystitis

The urinary tract consists of the organs involved in the production and elimination of liquid waste (urine) from the body: the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra. Urine is produced by the kidneys and travels from them through a pair of thin tubes, the ureters, to the bladder. The bladder, located in the pelvis, is a hollow, muscular, balloon-shaped organ that stores urine until a person urinates.

Interstitial cystitis (IC) is a chronic condition that causes recurring discomfort or pain in the bladder and the surrounding pelvic region as well as frequent, urgent, and/or painful urination. With IC, the bladder wall becomes inflamed or irritated, which affects the amount of urine the bladder can hold and causes scarring, stiffening, and bleeding in the bladder.

IC should not be confused with common cystitis, a bacterial infection of the bladder that is the most common type of urinary tract infection (UTI). Unlike common cystitis, interstitial cystitis is not caused by bacteria, nor does it respond to antibiotics.

Between 700,000 to one million Americans are estimated to have IC; of these, 90% are women.

The average age of onset is 40. Interstitial cystitis is not contagious, does not spread in the body, does not seem to worsen with time, and is not a cause of bladder cancer.

Though more research is needed, IC does not seem to affect fertility or the health of a fetus. For some women, the symptoms of IC improve or disappear during pregnancy; for others they get worse.

There is still much to be learned about interstitial cystitis, including its causes, relationship to other diseases and conditions, and its cure. In fact, because of the multiplicity and variety of symptoms associated with interstitial cystitis, many experts believe it may actually be several diseases.

For more information on interstitial cystitis and its treatment, please visit our website, urology.urmc.edu or talk to your physician about a referral. **Please call (585) 275-2838** for additional information, or to make an appointment.