

Bladder Pain Syndrome

Bladder Pain Syndrome is a chronic inflammation of the bladder wall. It isn't an infection like "common" cystitis caused by a bacterial infection and so it doesn't respond to antibiotic treatment. It is not caused by mental or physical stress. This condition can affect individuals in very different ways and it sometimes takes a long time to reach a correct diagnosis.

It can cause distressing and embarrassing symptoms such as:

- Frequency - Having to pass urine many times each day and night, even when you haven't drunk much (up to 60 times a day in severe cases).
- Urgency - Suddenly having a desperate need to pass urine, sometimes with pain, pressure feelings of spasms in your bladder.
- Pain – in your lower tummy area, urethra or vagina. This can range from mild discomfort to severe pain. Pain typically worsens as the bladder fills and is not always relieved after urination.

Who gets it?

No one in particular, it affects both men and women of any age but are commoner in women.

What causes it?

No one knows what causes bladder pain syndrome. It isn't infectious and can't be passed from one person to another. The inflammation of the bladder wall must be caused by something - irritants in the urine may be to blame or problems with the waterproof lining of the bladder.

Medical research is trying to find the cause and an effective treatment.

There is no specific investigation for the diagnosis of bladder pain syndrome, but the following may be needed after you have been seen and examined by your hospital doctor:

- A urine test looking for infection or other problems
- A bladder diary – a fairly simple chart of your drinks and toilet needs
- An ultrasound scan of your bladder and kidneys
- A urodynamic test – a more complex test in an outpatient clinic. This will be explained in more detail at the hospital.
- A cystoscopy – a telescopic inspection of the inside of your bladder usually done whilst you are asleep under an anaesthetic. At the same time a biopsy from the lining of the bladder may be taken. This will be explained in more detail at the hospital.

The condition can be difficult to treat, but there are some things that you can do yourself to help; you may be doing some of them already. They include:

- Cutting down on coffee, strong tea, certain fizzy drinks and alcohol. Caffeine can make the symptoms worse.
- Some foods can trigger the symptoms - citrus fruits and fruit juices, strong cheeses and chocolate are examples. Try cutting one thing out at a time to see what effect it has.
- Making your urine less acid – a teaspoon of sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) in water once or twice a day will do this.
- Pain killers – an anti-inflammatory like ibuprofen can help.

There is a range of treatments that can help you further which include:

- Bladder retraining. This trains your bladder to hold more urine and gives you more control over when you “go”. It can help up to 50% of people with bladder pain syndrome. Specialist nurses and physiotherapists are the best professionals to help.
- A cystoscopy and bladder wall stretch help up to 40% of sufferers for up to 18 months. It can be repeated.
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory tablets for pain relief
- Anti-inflammatory steroid pills sometimes help.
- Specialised pain killing tablets such as amitriptyline (this is also an antidepressant in high dosage) and Gabapentin.
- Elmiron tablets, a treatment developed in America, treat the waterproof bladder lining.
- Bladder instillations, when a solution put into the bladder with a catheter in the outpatient clinic, initially every week and then every four weeks. This also treats the waterproof lining of the bladder. You may be taught to perform the procedure yourself at home by the nurse in the clinic.
- Antihistamines may be helpful in selected cases.
- A physiotherapist or a specialist nurse can use special electrical treatments which help the nerves carrying bladder signals.
- Surgery is rarely used, and then only in extreme cases.

You can get more information from:

Bladder Health UK
Tel: 0121 702 0820
Email: info@bladderhealthuk.org

<http://www.interstitialcystitis.co.uk>

