

# Interstitial Cystitis and the Pelvic Floor

## Symptoms:

- Painful Urination
- Urinary urgency
- Urinary frequency
- Painful Intercourse
- Painful bowel movements
- Difficulty with emptying bladder or bowels completely
- Abdominal Discomfort/Pressure
- Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) Like symptoms

## Why?

Often times the symptoms that accompany chronic conditions such as Interstitial Cystitis (IC) can indirectly affect the muscle of the pelvis. The group of muscles that lie at the base of the pelvis are often referred to as the Pelvic Floor Muscles.

These muscles act as a sling or a hammock to support all the organs that lie directly above it. The bladder, bowels and sexual organs rest on these muscles and pass directly through the muscles to exit the body. Irritation to the tissues at any point can cause the muscles to activation in a protective response. Prolonged activation can lead to the symptoms above and often times result in pain.

## What to do?

Dietary Changes: changing what you put into your system can greatly affect you symptoms. Try to limit caffeine and alcohol consumption. Limit the more acidic food, such as tomatoes, citrus juices and fruits, and increase water consumption.

Maintain a healthy bathroom routine: Putting your bladder on a schedule can be helpful. Attempt to urinate, more or less, every two hours.

Pelvic Floor exercises: attempt to improve awareness and control of your pelvic floor muscles with exercises called a “Kegel”:

Squeezing muscles as though to stop a stream of urine, making sure not to increase the gluteal/bottom muscles or abdominal muscles. Follow activation with complete relaxation of the muscles to feel a slight pressure or release in the same region. Perform two sets of twenty a day making certain to completely relax following every contraction.

## Seek further Assistance if symptoms continues or worsen

- Primary Care Physician
- OB/GYN
- Urologist
- Physical Therapy for pelvic floor in order to restore normal muscle function and behavior with use of exercise **and techniques.**