



5 Minute Consult: Pruritus Daniel Markwalter, MD

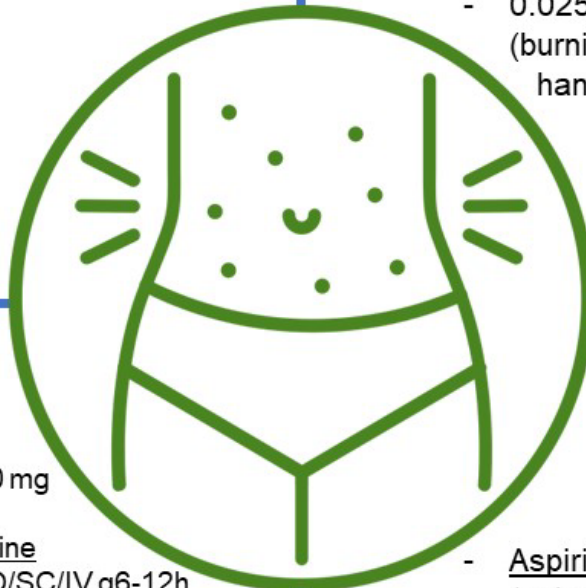
Etiologies: Xerosis, medications (consider deprescribing as treatment), uremia, cholestasis, heme (polycythemia, lymphoma, leukemia), neuropathic, and allergic, among others

Non-Pharmacologic

- Unscented detergent
- Smooth, lightweight fabrics (clothes, bedding)
- Moisturizers/barrier creams w/o scents and other additives
- Cool, humid environments
- Avoid overbathing, soap, and high temperatures
- Transparent film over localized areas
- Avoid caffeine, ETOH, hot water, and other vasodilators
- Oatmeal baths
- Cotton gloves
- Wet wraps

Topical

- Lidocaine (neuropathic)
 - 4-5% patches, 4% cream
- Pramoxine (uremic)
 - 1-2.5% BID (not on open skin)
- Steroids (ointment preferred)
 - Only for inflammatory conditions
 - Consult potency table; consider hydrocortisone or triamcinolone
- 2% diphenhydramine QID
- 5% doxepin QID
- 1-3% menthol
 - 0.025-0.1% capsaicin TID (burning resolves; wash hands)
- Zinc oxide/ferric oxide (calamine) if mild



Systemic

- Antihistamines (opioid, urticaria)
 - Cimetidine 300 mg PO q6-12h
 - Diphenhydramine 12.5-50 mg PO/SC/IV q6-12h
 - Hydroxyzine, cetirizine, doxepin, and cyproheptadine
- Steroids (inflammatory conditions)
 - Dexamethasone 2-8 mg PO/SC/IV qd or prednisone 10-30 mg PO qd
- Antidepressants
 - Mirtazapine 15-45 mg PO qhs
 - Paroxetine 10-40 mg PO qd (psychogenic, paraneoplastic)
 - Sertraline 50-100 mg PO qd (cholestatic)
- Gabapentin 100-300 mg PO qd-TID
- Ondansetron 4-8 mg PO/SC/IV q8h (opioid, cholestatic, and uremic)

Special Cases

- Cholestyramine 4 g PO qd; titrate to max QID (cholestatic)
- Aspirin 500 mg PO q8-12 h (polycythemia)
- Cromolyn 200 mg PO qd-QID (mast cell stabilization)
- Consider lidocaine infusion for refractory cases
- Opioid-induced pruritus
 - Morphine most common
 - Antihistamines, ondansetron, and gabapentin as treatment options
 - Rotate opioids

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References

1. Adapted from: Bodtke A and Ligon K. *Hospice and Palliative Medicine Handbook: A Clinical Guide*. 2016.
2. Icon from N.Style of the Noun Project.