

## Where Do We Stand with Pruritus Management

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### Background

Pruritus causes significant morbidity in burns patients. Individual burns units often have department specific guidelines, but there is yet to be a consensus on its management with an evidence based approach. We reviewed the relevant literature with an aim of providing an update of pruritus management and assessing the evidence behind different methods.

### Method

Pubmed and Burns were searched using comprehensive search terms.

### Discussion

The International Society of Burn Injury (ISBI) recommend a four stage approach when managing pruritus; assessment, skin hydration, pharmacological and non pharmacological (1).

**1. Assessment:** There are a number of tools available for assessment of itch severity and its associated morbidity.

**2. Skin Hydration:** Moisturisers and emollients have been shown to decrease itch severity.



(7) Variety of Treatments Offer Relied for a Complex Problem.

**3. Pharmacological:** There is currently no clear stepwise evidence based approach when discussing pharmacological management of pruritus (1). However, oral antihistamines are the mainstay of therapy with increasing evidence for gabapentin and pregabalin when used in addition to oral antihistamines in all age groups (2). Other agents such as ondansetron are becoming more common, but share the lack of high level of evidence to support their use.

**4. Non-pharmacological:** Compression garments, skin cooling and massage therapy have been long used when managing burn related pruritus. Recent trials have shown emerging evidence for the use of Pulse Dye Laser, low energy extracorporeal shock wave therapy and electrocutaneous nerve stimulation devices (3,4,5).

### Conclusion

Pruritus continues to be a challenge within burns departments. A multimodal approach is recommended when considering pharmacological and non pharmacological treatment options. There is emerging evidence of new approaches to pruritus management which show exciting promise.

### References

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