

Navigating the management of cholestatic pruritus in patients with PBC: Insights from the multidisciplinary team



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Expert MDT faculty



Prof. Gideon Hirschfield

University of Toronto
Toronto, Canada



Prof. Sonja Ständer

University of Münster
Münster, Germany



Ms Michelle Clayton

St James' University Hospital
Leeds, UK



Mrs Collette Thain MBE

PBC Foundation
Edinburgh, UK

Questionnaires to self-report and measure pruritus in PBC



Intensity

Numerical rating scale (NRS): intensity of itching is ranked from 0 to 10¹ (0=no itch; 10=worst imaginable itch)²

Visual analogue scale (VAS): intensity of itching marked on a 10 cm ruler (0=no itch; 10=worst itch imaginable)¹

Patient global impression of severity (PGI-S): severity of itching at that time point is ranked from 1 to 7 (1=not present; 7=extremely severe)^{3,4}

Patient global impression of change (PGI-C): change in severity of itching since baseline is ranked from 1 to 7 (1=very much improved; 7=very much worse)^{3,4}

5-D itch scale: five domains include **degree (severity)**, duration, direction, **disability** and distribution.^{1,5,6} First four domains measured on a five-point Likert scale;⁵ distribution includes 16 potential locations of itch⁶

PBC-40: assesses **HRQoL** of patients with PBC with 40 questions over six domains (one of which is itch). Itch domain includes three questions to assess impact of itch over the last 4 weeks rated on a five-point scale (never, rarely, sometimes, most of the time, always)⁷



Impact on QoL

Commonly used to measure pruritus at time of assessment or the worst pruritus in the previous 24 hours¹

HRQoL, health-related QoL; PBC, primary biliary cholangitis; QoL, quality of life.

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4. Vernon M, et al. *J Am Acad Dermatol*. 2021;84:1132–3; 5. Hegade VS, et al. *Frontline Gastroenterol*. 2016;7:158–66; 6. Elman S, et al. *Br J Dermatol*. 2010;162:587–93;
7. Jacoby A, et al. *Gut*. 2005;54:1622–9.

Treatment of cholestatic pruritus in PBC

EASL 2017 guideline recommendations¹


Line of Tx	Agent	MoA	Approval
First line	Cholestyramine	Bile acid sequestrant and anion exchange resin ¹⁻³	Yes ^{2,3}
Second line	Rifampicin/ rifampin⁴	Antibiotic ^{3,5}	Off-label ^{2,3}
Third line	Naltrexone or nalmefene	μ-opioid receptor antagonists ¹⁻³	Off-label ^{2,3}
Subsequent lines in unresponsive disease	Sertraline	SSRI	Off-label ^{2,3}
	Gabapentin	Anticonvulsant ⁶	Off-label ²

Japanese 2014 guideline recommendations⁵

Line of Tx	Agent
First line	Cholestyramine
Subsequent lines	Rifampicin

Japanese approvals post-2014 guidelines^{2,3}

Agent	MoA
Nalfurafine	κ-opioid receptor agonist

 **Liver transplantation** when pruritus is 'persistent and intractable' after therapeutic trials¹

EASL, European Association for the Study of the Liver; MoA, mechanism of action; PBC, primary biliary cholangitis; SSRI, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor; Tx, therapy. 1. EASL. *J Hepatol.* 2017;67:145–72; 2. Düll MM, Kremer AE. *Clin Liver Dis.* 2022;26:727–45; 3. Smith HT, et al. *Dig Dis Sci.* 2023;68:2710–30; 4. Suresh AB, et al. 2023. Available at: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK557488/ (accessed 28 August 2024); 5. Intractable Hepatobiliary Disease Study Group. *Hepatol Res.* 2014;44:71–90; 6. Yasaei R, et al. 2024. Available at: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK493228/ (accessed 28 August 2024).