

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



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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).