

Generalised Pruritus

General points

- Dry skin, eczema, and scabies are the commonest cause of generalised pruritus
- If someone is itching all over, take a full history and examine the skin very carefully
- A full general examination is essential - feel for lymph nodes and organomegaly

Treatment - try

- Standard emollients and soap substitutes
- Croxamiton (=Eurax) +/- hydrocortisone cream +/- levomenthol cream
 - apply twice daily/pm to pruritic areas

If symptoms are still uncontrollable and/or there are a lot of anxieties consider

- Doxepin 50mg nocte. (Care in elderly at this dose)
- Amitriptyline 30–150mg nocte
- Sertraline

Sedating antihistamines

- Hydroxyzine 25 -50 mg nocte
- Chlorpheniramine 4mg nocte/tds

The use of potent topical steroids should be discouraged

Therapeutic tips

If no rash is seen (with or without) excoriations consider the following causes of itch:

- Anaemia especially iron deficiency
- Uraemia
- Cholestasis
- Thyroid disease - both hypo and hyperthyroidism
- Autoimmune liver disease
- Lymphoma, especially in young adults. Itch might precede lymphoma by several years
- Carcinoma, especially in middle age and elderly
- Psychological

Investigations

Urinalysis + Chest X-ray

FBC, UE, LFT, TFT, ESR, ferritin