

Are there any effective treatments for postburn itch?

Clinical Question	What are effective interventions for the treatment of postburn pruritus in any care setting?
Bottom Line	<p>The research findings on treatments for postburn itch indicate that gabapentin, pregabalin, and doxepin may be more effective than oral antihistamines in reducing postburn itch. Additionally, there is higher confidence that ondansetron probably reduces postburn itch more effectively than oral antihistamines. This may indicate that postburn pruritus may be partly neuropathic</p> <p>In terms of topical therapies, CQ-01 (hydrogel) may be more effective in reducing postburn itch compared to relevant controls, and enalapril ointment probably reduces postburn itch more effectively than a placebo. On the other hand, silicone gel cream and Provase moisturizer likely have little to no effect on postburn itch, while the impact of beeswax and herbal oil cream could not be determined due to unavailable data.</p> <p>Regarding physical modalities, enhanced education on silicone gel sheeting may be more effective than conventional education in reducing postburn itch. Massage therapy and extracorporeal shock wave therapy may also be more effective in reducing postburn itch compared to relevant controls.</p>
Caveat	The above evidence is based on few trials with low sample numbers. These same trials had design issues such as lack of blinding and poor follow up. Adverse event reporting was minimal and so it is unknown if these treatments have any harms associated with them.
Context	Postburn pruritus (itch) is a common and distressing symptom experienced on healing or healed burn or donor site wounds. Topical, systemic, and physical treatments are available to control postburn pruritus; however, it remains unclear how effective these are.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Sinha S, Gabriel VA, Arora RK, Shin W, Scott J, Bharadia SK, Verly M, Rahmani WM, Nickerson DA, Fraulin FOG, Chatterjee P, Ahuja RB, Biernaskie JA. Interventions for postburn pruritus. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2024, Issue 6. Art. No.: CD013468. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD013468.pub2. This review contains 25 trials which included 1166 people.

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Systematic review link:

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD013468.pub2/full>