

# The occurrence of itch after burns: is there a need for oral medication?



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## Introduction:

This study describes the occurrence and management of itch in adult patients admitted to the Burn Center in Rotterdam, with a follow up for one year.

## Methods:

For one month all adult patients admitted were asked to participate in the study. After the first episode of itching the Burn Itch Questionnaire (BIQ) was used to record itch frequency until discharge. From the patient's medical dossier data were extracted on medical history, prescribed medication and routine usual care. Follow up was for 3, 6 and 12 months after discharge. The itch was scored with the Visual Analogue Thermometer (VAT); 0 no itch - 10 worst itch.

## Results N=35

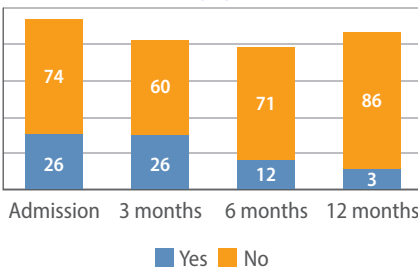
Male 80%  
 Mean LOS 21 days (3-78)  
 Follow up 86%  
 Mean age 42 yr (18-81)  
 Flame burns 22 (63%)  
 Surgery 15 (43%)  
 Mean TBSA 9% (1-31)

## First itch (3-25 days)

VAT 0-1 7 (20%)  
 VAT 2-5 24 (69%)  
 VAT 6-8 4 (11%)  
 VAT 9-10 0 (0%)

After three and six months, 32% and 40% of the respondents were without pruritus, respectively; after 12 months this was 60%. After 12 months 34% still applied this ointment which was preferred to oral medication. After 12 months, only one patient used anti-histamines.

## Use of medication (%)



## Effect of medication (%)

3 months (26%) no improvement (33%)  
 moderate effect (56%)  
 complete reduction (11%)  
 6 months (12%) moderate effect  
 12 months (3%) moderate effect



## Usual care of itch

- Itch assessment - VAT
- Medication - antihistamines (promethazine)
- Healed skin - application of Alhydran



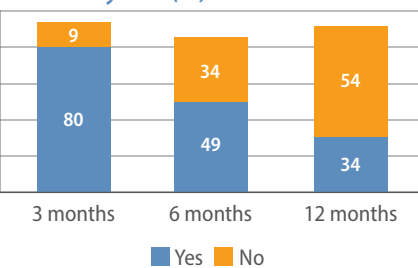
## Alhydran

- Medical cream based on Aloe Vera
- Moisture-regulating cream
- Easy application
- Reduces dry and reddened skin
- Rapidly reduces itching
- Increases skin elasticity

## Factors increasing or inducing itch

- Dry skin
- Too warm (sweating, weather, cloths)
- Stress and emotions
- Standing in upright position
- Removal pressure garments
- Itch comes with spells
- Does sometimes interfere with daily activities and sleep

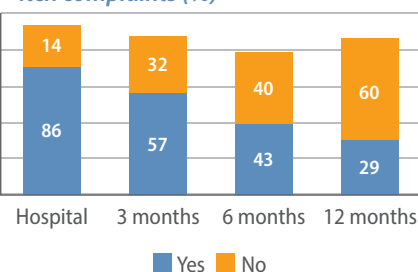
## Use of Alhydran (%)



## Effect of Alhydran (%)

3 months (80%) no improvement (7%)  
 moderate effect (18%)  
 complete reduction (75%)  
 6 months (49%) no improvement (17%)  
 moderate effect (11%)  
 complete reduction (72%)  
 12 months (34%) no improvement (9%)  
 moderate effect (18%)  
 complete reduction (73%)

## Itch complaints (%)



## Conclusion:

Pruritus is common after burn injury. 29% of the respondents still experience itch after one year; oral medication is often not needed; Topical ointments such as Alhydran are preferred.