

## **BRACHIORADIAL PRURITUS**

Brachioradial pruritus is a neurogenic itch syndrome of the upper extremities. It is typically localized to the skin on top of the forearms, but involvement of the upper arms and shoulders is also common. It may be unilateral or bilateral. Scratching reportedly only makes the discomfort worse, and most patients discover that application of cold packs is often the only therapy that provides symptomatic relief.

There has been a controversy regarding the cause of brachioradial pruritus: is it caused by a nerve compression in the cervical spine or is it caused by a prolonged exposure to sunlight?

Brachioradial pruritus may be attributed to a neuropathy, such as chronic cervical radiculopathy.

Many patients with brachioradial pruritus may have underlying cervical spine pathology. Whether this association is causal or coincidental, remains to be determined.

Treatment is difficult. Treatment choices include:

Sun protection wearing clothing with long sleeves (more effective than sunscreens alone).

Cooling lotions as required (camphor and menthol).

Cervical spine manipulation. This must be done by an appropriately qualified health professional (i.e., a physical therapist).

Electrical cutaneous nerve field stimulation.

Capsaicin (Zostrix) cream – this depletes nerve endings of their chemical transmitters.

Doxepin (Zonalon) cream - (Doxepin is an oral antidepressant and it can help itch when used orally or topically).

Local anesthetic creams.

Oral amitriptyline tablets (tricyclic antidepressant) at night.

Oral anticonvulsant agents including gabapentin.

