

CASE 26-3

An otherwise healthy 20-year-old male presents to your office with a 1-month history of generalized pruritus. He otherwise feels well, except for a sore back from a sprain that occurred 6 weeks ago. He denies any recent travel, any contacts with people who have had pruritus, any risk factors for transmissible infection, or any prescription medications. Examination is unremarkable except for mild xerosis on his legs and tenderness on palpation of his lower back.

Which next step(s) should you take?

- (A) Ask about over the counter medications and supplements
- (B) Check a complete blood count with differential
- (C) Order a computed tomography (CT) exam
- (D) Give a trial of emollients and antihistamines

The correct answer is (A), ask about over the counter medications and supplements.

A thorough history is an important first step when evaluating the etiology of pruritus in patients with minimal skin findings. Several medications can be associated with pruritus, which is more commonly generalized than localized. Some patients may need prompting to recall their use of over the counter products. While this patient initially denies taking prescription medications, on further discussion here the member is taking naproxen for his lower back pain.

Blood and imaging studies are not appropriate initial first steps in this healthy patient. Emollients and antihistamines would not resolve the pruritus while the patient is still taking naproxen.