

Numbing Cream for Painful Procedures

Prevent and reduce the pain of needles

We partner with you and your child to prevent and relieve pain as completely as possible.

Our commitment

Needles are often needed to treat patients. They are used for routine procedures such as immunizations, blood draws, starting IV (intravenous) lines and stitches. We partner with you and your child to prevent and relieve pain as completely as possible. This includes reducing the pain and anxiety related to needles.

Numbing cream (topical lidocaine) reduces the pain by numbing the skin before the needle stick. The following information describes how to safely use numbing cream to reduce your child's pain. Use this medicine only if recommended by your healthcare provider. Check with your doctor first before giving any type of medicine to your child.

When to use topical lidocaine cream

Numbing cream such as LMX-4 or EMLA cream should be considered for any procedure that involves a needle. For the best pain relief, LMX-4 needs to be put on the skin at least 20 to 40 minutes **before** the needle stick and can stay in place for 60 minutes. EMLA cream needs to be put on the skin at least 60 minutes **before** the needle stick. Once the cream is wiped away, the numb feeling can last up to 60 minutes.

Where to get numbing cream

You do not need a prescription for the LMX-4 cream. You can buy it at many local pharmacies. If your child has an SCH clinic appointment on the same day, the clinic can apply LMX-4 before going to the lab. The lab cannot put numbing cream on patients. EMLA cream is by prescription only. You can ask your SCH or primary care provider for a prescription of EMLA cream.

Where to apply it on your child's skin

Numbing cream must only be put on intact skin. Do not put over a wound, rash or blister. Do not wash the skin before putting it on. The cream works best with the skin's natural oils. Ask your child's healthcare provider if you are not sure which area(s) of skin will be used for the needle stick. For immunizations, apply cream to the entire shaded areas on these most common locations:

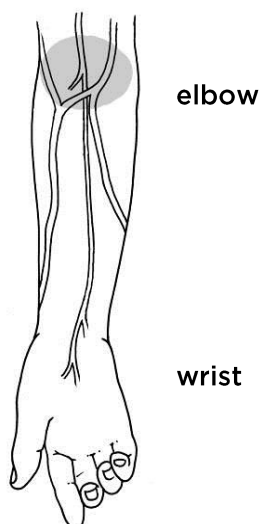


(infants & toddlers)



(older children & adults)

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For a blood draw, talk to your healthcare provider about the best location(s) for your child. The most common location is on the inside of the elbow (see illustration to the left). Apply cream to the entire shaded area on both arms.

How to apply it on the skin:

1. Rub a small amount of cream into the skin for 30 seconds where the needle will be inserted.
2. Apply more cream to cover the area about the size of a quarter. This layer should be thick, like frosting on a cake.
3. If you are not wearing gloves, rinse your hands with water. Do not use soap or alcohol gels. They can increase the amount of medicine absorbed.
4. The cream works best if it is completely covered with plastic wrap. "Press and seal" wrap is the best option. You can also use a different brand of clear plastic wrap. We do not recommend using the tape that comes with the cream, it is very hard to remove. Make sure the plastic is not wrapped too tightly around the arm or leg.
5. Leave the cream in place until it is time for the needle procedure, then wipe away. Do not use heat or cold on the area with cream since this can change the amount of medicine absorbed.

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

What to expect

It is normal for the area of skin where the cream was put on to look white (blanched). The skin and tissue around will be numb. **Numbing cream absorbs into the skin to reduce the pain of the needle. It does not reduce the discomfort of the muscle during and after an immunization.** Your child will still feel the pressure (or pushing) of the skin in that area.

All medicines have side effects. Numbing cream may cause redness, itching and irritation. Remove the cream and tell your child's healthcare provider if you have any concerns.

Patient Education Resources

- What to Expect at Your Blood Draw at Seattle Children's Lab (seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE1556.pdf)
- What to Expect When You Get an IV at Seattle Children's (seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE2005.pdf)

Questions?

All members of the team are committed to partner with you and your child to improve the quality of the experience with needles. Please let your child's healthcare provider know if you have questions or feedback.

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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