

Use of Topical Anaesthetics to Ease Cannulation Pain Teaching Points for Nurses & Clerical Staff

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Limit the use of topical anaesthetics

Most patients do not report experiencing discomfort with cannulation and do not require a topical anaesthetic. Topical anaesthetics are expensive and there is no published evidence to support widespread or universal use. They have, however, been shown to be effective in patients where significant pain is a concern or in patients with a severe fear of needles.

BC Provincial Renal Agency (BCPRA)-funded topical anaesthetics

Starting January 2012, BCPRA will fund 2 topical anaesthetics for patients that meet specific criteria:

- (1) Lidocaine 2.5%/ prilocaine 2.5% (EMLA®); and
- (2) Liposomal lidocaine 4% (Maxilene-4®)

Criteria for patients to have their topical anaesthetic covered by BCPRA funding:

- (1) Cannulation has been attempted using intradermal lidocaine and the patient continues to complain of pain; OR
- (2) Cannulation has not been attempted because patient has a severe fear of needles; OR
- (3) Children 19 and under.

Topical anaesthetic must be ordered by a nephrologist using the pre-printed "Order Form for Topical Anaesthetics". Order is faxed to and filled by the patient's community BCPRA pharmacy.

Application of topical anaesthetics

Timing: Apply at least one hour before cannulation.

How to apply:

1. Squeeze about 1.25 cm (0.5 in) of cream or about the size of nickel onto each of the sites to be needled.
2. Wrap a clear plastic wrap around the arm covering the areas that will be needled.

OR

1. Place a thick layer of cream on the back side of a cap (provided by nurse).
2. Place the cap over the areas that will be needled and secure with tape.

Prior to dialysis, remove the plastic wrap, wipe off the cream and clean the entire area with chlorhexidine and alcohol.

Side effects: Rare and may include whitening or redness of the skin and slight puffiness and initial burning or itching on the skin where the cream is applied. These are normal reactions and will disappear without treatment.

Patient teaching pamphlet for applying topical anaesthetic prior to cannulation is available at www.bcrenalagency.ca.