

Table 2: Application of Topical Anaesthetic Prior to Cannulation of a Fistula or Graft

What is a topical anaesthetic cream?

A topical anaesthetic cream (e.g. EMLA® or Maxilene 4® cream) is used to create a temporary loss of feeling or numbness of the skin before putting in a needle.

Are there side effects?

Side effects are 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.

When should a topical anaesthetic cream be applied?

A topical anaesthetic cream is best applied at least one hour before dialysis. This allows it enough time to work before putting in a needle.

How is a topical anaesthetic cream applied?

1. Before you leave the hemodialysis unit, ask your nurse which sites she /he plans to needle on the next hemodialysis run.
- * 2. At least one hour before your next hemodialysis run, squeeze about 1.25 cm (0.5 in) of cream or about the size of a nickel onto each of the sites to be needed. If you are not sure which site will be needed, place the cream above or below the last needle site (for site rotation).

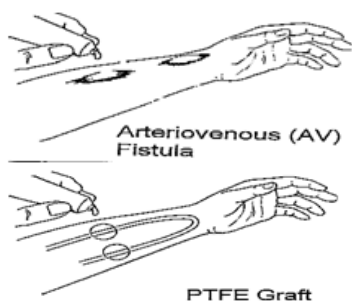
- * 3. Wrap a clear plastic wrap around the arm covering the areas that will be needed. Do not spread out the cream or try to rub it into your skin.
4. When it is time for dialysis, remove the plastic wrap, wipe off the cream and clean the entire area with chlorhexidine and alcohol.

DO NOT apply near eyes or on open wounds.

* If your nurse gave you a cap off the top of a heparin vial, substitute these steps for 2 & 3:

2. Place a thick layer of cream on the back side of the cap.
3. Place the cap over the areas that will be needed and secure with tape.

Adapted from the patient teaching pamphlet developed by Vancouver General Hospital Pharmacy Department, with thanks.



The information in this pamphlet is provided for educational and information purposes, and to support discussion with your health care team about your medical condition and treatment. It does not constitute medical advice and should not substitute advice given by your physician or other qualified health care professional.