

Is This Right for My Child?

Numbing creams are generally safe for children and adults, but there are certain factors to consider:

Age of Child

- Do not apply any numbing cream without speaking to your physician on a preterm infant less than 34 weeks old
- EMLA can be used on preterm infants between 34-44 weeks
- AMETOP and EMLA can be used on infants from 1-month in age (44-weeks) to adults.

Time Needed Before Needle Poke

- 30-45 minutes - use AMETOP
- 60-90 minutes - both EMLA and AMETOP are an option

Do Not Use Numbing Cream:

- On broken skin or wounds
- On mucous membranes (*eyes, ears, lips, mouth, genital regions*)
- If your child has allergies or sensitivities to:
 - Other local anesthetics
 - Ametop (Tetracaine 4%)
 - EMLA (Lidocaine 2.5%/Prilocaine 2.5%)
 - “ester” drugs; do not use AMETOP
 - “amide” drugs; do not use EMLA

Please talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions or if your child has:

- Epilepsy
- Areas of eczema
- G6PD deficiency

Do not swallow AMETOP or EMLA

Where to Find Numbing Cream:

- The most readily available numbing creams are EMLA and AMETOP.
- Available at most pharmacies, including the BCCH pharmacy.

Many clinics and areas within BC Children’s Hospital supply local topical anesthetics. Please check with your health care provider before your appointment.

Other brands of numbing creams may be available at your local pharmacy or online. Instructions may differ from above; please ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider.

Further Resources

To learn more about the **Comfort PACT** and additional ways to support your child through medical procedures.

[BCCH Pain Guide - Comfort Approaches](#)



[BCCH Pain Management and Comfort](#)

Child Life Poke Practice Program

Phone: (604) 875-2345 ext. 7687

No referral is needed to access Child Life Service.

How to Minimize the Pain of Needle Pokes with Numbing Cream



BC Children’s Hospital is committed to providing the best pain management and promotion of comfort for all persons through the Comfort PACT (Pain Addressed, Comfort Tended). Medical procedures that involve needles are a major source of stress and anxiety for children and youth. While the needle poke itself is often unavoidable, numbing creams (also known as topical anesthetics) are available to your child or teenager to help improve their confidence and comfort leading up to and during the procedure.

When to Use Numbing Cream:

- Before routine blood work
- Before an IV insertion (ER, surgical procedures, medical imaging)
- Before a vaccination or injection



This resource was co-developed by patient partners and health care professionals

Where to Apply Numbing Cream

For blood tests:



Apply to the inner bend of elbow. Try to cover a spot with large looking veins (the blue lines under the skin).

For an IV insertion:



Apply to the top of the hand, just below the bend in wrist. Try to cover a spot with large looking veins.

For vaccination:



Apply to the outer top of the arm (over deltoid muscle).

Tip - It can be helpful to put the cream on the left and right side to allow your nurse or lab tech to assess, which has the best vein.

If you are unsure where to apply the cream or which procedure your child is having, ask your health care professional or laboratory technician.

How to Apply Numbing Cream

Place a marble sized amount of the cream (approximately 1cm in diameter) on the appropriate location.



Do not rub the cream in; it needs to sit on top of the skin to work.

If the area develops

extreme redness, irritation, swelling or itching, remove the product and wash the area.

Cover the cream with an occlusive (waterproof, clear plastic) dressing.



Press the dressing down onto the skin to create a border around the cream to hold it in place.

Occlusive dressings, such as Tegaderm, often comes with the cream or can be purchased over the counter at most pharmacies.

Tip - If you do not have an occlusive dressing, you can use kitchen plastic cling wrap and tape or Press and Seal Wrap.

Check the dressing periodically for leakage. If the cream is leaking, add another

dressing or more *plastic cling wrap* or *Press and Seal* to cover and stop the leak.

Leave the cream on for the recommended time needed for skin numbing to take effect.

- Emla™ takes 60-90 minutes but can be left on for up to 4hrs. Numbing sensation lasts 1-2 hours after removal but may vary per user.
- Ametop™ takes 30 minutes but **should not be left on longer than 45 minutes**. Numbing sensation lasts up to 4 hours after removal.

Remove dressing and wipe away cream with a tissue.

If your child finds removal of the dressing difficult, here are some tips that may help minimize distress:

- Allow them to take off the dressing themselves or encourage them to help.
- Ask your nurse or technician for adhesive remover which will help reduce the stickiness, making removal easier.
- For Tegaderm removal, grasp opposite corners of the dressing and while holding



the dressing parallel to the skin, pull the sides away from each other to stretch and loosen the dressing.