

## EMLA Cream

The purpose of this handout is to explain when and how to use EMLA cream.

### What is EMLA cream?

EMLA cream is a numbing cream that can be placed on skin to provide pain relief. It is often used to numb an area before placing an IV, drawing blood, or giving injections.

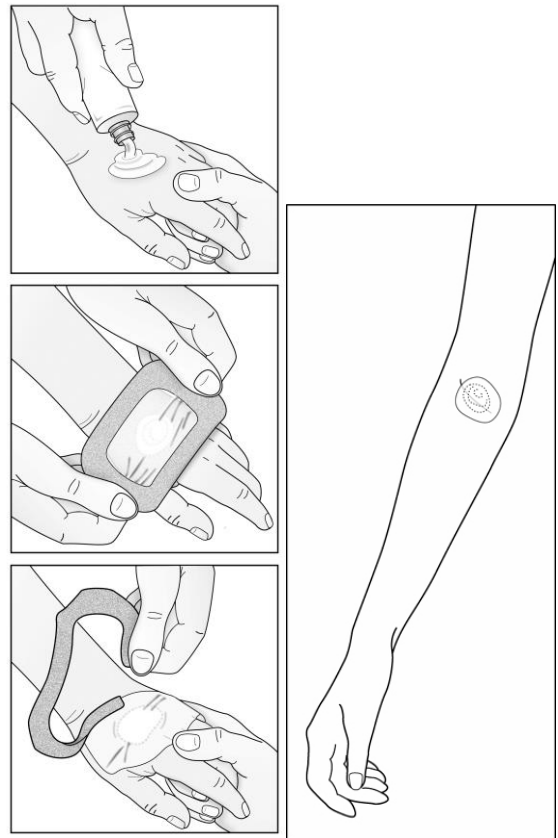
### When do I use EMLA and how long does it last?

EMLA should be applied at least 1 hour before a needle stick and longer before painful procedures. EMLA cream will begin to numb the site within 15 minutes after it is applied however it will take **at least** 60 minutes to provide pain relief. The greatest pain relief is seen 2-3 hours after it has been applied. A protective covering helps keep the EMLA in place but is not required. Before the procedure the EMLA cream is removed. The numbness or pain relief will last for 1 to 2 hours after the cream is removed.

Be careful not to get the EMLA cream on your hands. If you do, wash them right away to be sure that your hands don't become numb.

### How do I apply EMLA cream?

EMLA should be applied to normal skin. Do not apply to open areas or irritated skin. For young children, it is best to have two people help. One person holds the child; one applies the EMLA.



### When using EMLA cream before a blood draw or IV placement

- Cover the backs of both hands and the inside of both elbows for an IV placement.
- Cover the inside of both elbows for drawing blood.
- First, look for large blue veins on the backs of the hands and inside of the elbows.
- Cover the largest blue veins with a large dollop of EMLA cream. Infants and small children will need less cream than larger children.

### **When using it before an injection into the skin or muscle**

1. Cover the site with a large dollop of EMLA cream. Spread a thick layer over the skin surface; do not rub it in.
2. Take a transparent dressing and apply over the EMLA cream so it is completely covered.
3. Smooth down the dressing edges to avoid leakage.
4. For persons who do not like the clear dressings or are sensitive to them, you can smooth a piece of plastic cling wrap over the EMLA cream and secure it in place with first-aid tape.. Be sure to tape it down well to avoid leakage.

### **Frequently asked questions**

- Why is the skin beneath the EMLA pale or red? Some patients notice their skin is a pale or red color. This is normal. This effect is short term and may last for 1 to 2 hours. It will not interfere with the procedure.
- What should I do if my child develops a rash, swelling or itching at the site? If this happens, remove the dressing and wipe off the EMLA cream. Wash all the sites with soap and water.

- Is there anything I should avoid when using EMLA? Do not apply EMLA near eyes or on open wounds.
- How old does my child need to be to safely use EMLA? Do not use EMLA on children under 1 month of age.
- Can I use EMLA if my child is getting a heel stick? Studies do not show benefit when using EMLA for heel sticks. Therefore, it is not recommended for use with heel sticks. Other options for heel sticks include feeding just before or during the poke, shushing in the child's ear, snuggling in the blanket, skin to skin contact with parent and sucrose (high concentrated sugar water) if available.
- Where should I store EMLA? EMLA should be stored with other medicines. Keep extra EMLA and all other medicines out of reach of children.
- Once I place the EMLA on my child's skin, is there anything else I need to do? Once the cream has been put on your child, be sure the dressing stays in place and your child does not get EMLA in the eyes or mouth.

If you have further questions about EMLA, please talk with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist, or call \_\_\_\_\_.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2017 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5706.