

Thames Valley Surgical Services

Minor Surgical Procedures - Experience, Quality and Safety

Using EMLA cream

What is EMLA cream?	Emla Cream 5% is a local anaesthetic cream that can be applied to the skin to suppress the pain of needle procedures. Its formula has been used successfully in GP surgeries and hospitals for years. Emla cream contains prilocaine and lidocaine, two ingredients that numb the skin. (The cream is left on the skin for at least 60 minutes to take effect). The result is one you'll be very happy about - less pain during the anaesthetic or no need for an anaesthetic. Many of us are anxious about having vaccinations, mainly because of the pain of the injection. The cream can be used to temporarily numb the surface of the skin before procedures such as injections, taking blood samples and minor skin surgery. You can apply emla cream at home, prior to a needle involving procedure, to reduce pain and so make it less distressing for you or your child when visiting a doctor.
How to use EMLA cream?	Apply a thick layer of Emla cream a minimum of 2 hours before the surgical procedure to the mole, lump or skin tag that gets treated. Leave it there with a sticky transparent plaster (must NOT be absorbent) or if you do not have this, just with a good piece of cling film.
How does it work?	Emla cream is a local anaesthetic that can be applied to the skin to help suppress the pain of needle procedures. When Emla cream is applied to the skin, the lidocaine and prilocaine prevent pain signals passing from that area to the brain and so numb the skin. This means otherwise painful procedures can be performed without causing pain.
What procedures can it be used for?	Surface procedures like shave excisions can often be carried out without the use of anaesthetic at all. If a needle anaesthetic is required the prior use of EMLA will greatly reduce the pain experienced through the needle.
Why use Emla Cream	Approximately 10% of people have a real aversion to needles. Were not sure why this happens, but the physical pain of the needle may create a psychological fear of needles in the future. Children can become affected and, if not addresses, this fear can become a problem in adulthood too.