TITLE
TOPICAL, LOCAL ANESTHETIC: USE AND APPLICATION

If you have any questions or comments regarding the information in this protocol, please contact the Policy Department at policy@albertahealthservices.ca. The Policy website is the official source of current approved policies, procedures and directives.

OBJECTIVE

- To describe timely, safe, effective administration of topical, local anesthetics to patients prior to potentially painful, skin-breaking procedures, including initiation of intravenous therapy, intramuscular or subcutaneous injection, and venipuncture.

APPLICABILITY

Compliance with this protocol is required by all Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, students, volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers as necessary), working at Stollery Children’s Hospital. This protocol does not limit any legal rights to which you may otherwise be entitled.

PROTOCOL

- This protocol does not apply in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

1. Points of Emphasis

1.1 Topical, local anesthetics shall be applied according to manufacturer’s instructions or drug monographs before a potentially painful skin breaking procedure.

   a) If applicable, topical, local anesthetics may be applied to multiple sites (e.g., dorsa of both hands prior to intravenous initiation or both antecubital fossae prior to venipuncture).

1.2 A patient care order is not required for application of topical, local anesthetic.

1.3 Topical, local anesthetics shall not be used in the following patient populations:

   a) those with known sensitivity to local anesthetics;

   b) those with severe hepatic disease;
c) patients or parents who indicate they do not wish to have topical, local anesthetic applied. Older children and teens may prefer to use active coping strategies (e.g., distraction).

1.4 Topical, local anesthetics shall be used in conjunction with other supportive care measures (e.g., comfort positioning, sucrose or distraction).

1.5 Additional methods of pain control must also be considered. Child Life should be consulted for any child who demonstrates increased anxiety and fear related to needle procedures.

2. Application of Topical Anesthetic

2.1 Confirm patient identity (refer to Alberta Health Services Patient Identity Verification Policy).

2.2 Perform hand hygiene and gather supplies (refer to Alberta Health Services Hand Hygiene Policy and Procedure).

2.3 Choose location(s) and ensure skin is intact. Topical, local anesthetics should not be applied to areas of skin that are broken or irritated as this may cause a local reaction. Topical, local anesthetics may be applied on two to four (2 – 4) sites concurrently, for the same patient.

2.4 Apply a thick layer of topical, anesthetic, approximately 1.5 centimetres (cm) by 1.5 cm and cover area(s) with a transparent dressing.

2.5 Observe the site for any adverse reactions to the cream such as urticaria. Other effects may include a transient blanching of the area followed by transient erythema.

a) Patients and health care providers should be aware that sensation to the area may be blocked for the duration of the analgesia, and that care must be taken to avoid trauma to the area.

b) If the patient experiences an adverse reaction, remove the cream and cleanse the area.

2.6 After adequate onset, remove the dressing and cream. Onset time for topical, local anesthetics is:

a) 30 minutes for Maxilene®; and

b) 60 – 90 minutes for EMLA®.
3. **Documentation**

   3.1 Document the application of topical, local anesthetic on the medication administration record (MAR).

   3.2 Document site assessment and any adverse reactions in the health record.

**DEFINITION**

**Health care provider(s)** means any person who provides goods or services to a patient, inclusive of health care professionals, staff, students, volunteers and other persons acting on behalf of or in conjunction with Alberta Health Services.

**REFERENCES**

- Alberta Health Services *Patient Identity Verification Policy*
- Alberta Health Services *Hand Hygiene Policy and Procedure*

**REVISIONS**

N/A