



Ice massage is another technique you can use to numb your needle sites. Place ice inside a glove and massage the webbing between the thumb and first finger of the non-access hand with the ice glove.

For more information on how this works see: “[Effect of cryotherapy on arteriovenous fistula puncture-related pain in hemodialysis patients](#)” Sabitha P. B., D. C. Khakha, S. Mahajan, S. Gupta, M. Agarwal, and S. L. Yadav



Breathing for relaxation can also help with anxiety about needles. When you sit down in your dialysis chair, go ahead and put your feet up and get comfortable so that you don’t have to move after the needles are placed. Relax your jaw and shoulders and take five deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth. You may also want to try closing your eyes and visualizing something positive while you breathe.

To file a grievance, patients may contact:

Qsource ESRD Network 10 (Illinois)  
911 E. 86th Street, Suite 202  
Indianapolis, IN 46240  
Toll-Free Patient Line: (800) 456-6919  
[www.ESRDNetwork10.org](http://www.ESRDNetwork10.org)

Qsource ESRD Network 12  
(Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska)  
920 Main, Suite 801  
Kansas City, MO 64105  
Toll-Free Patient Line: (800) 444-9965  
[www.ESRDNetwork12.org](http://www.ESRDNetwork12.org)

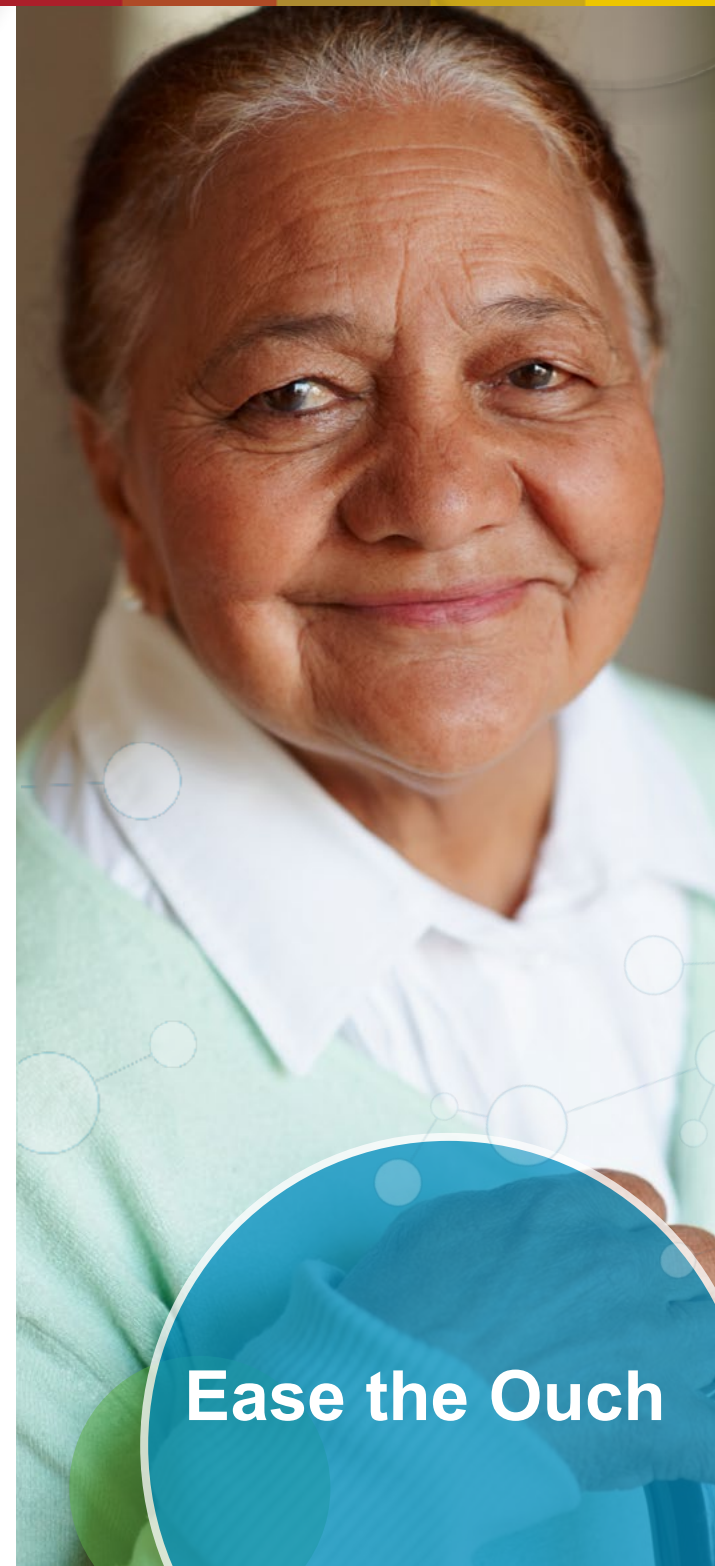
Quality Insights Renal Network 4  
(Delaware and Pennsylvania)  
1586 Sumneytown Pike #1470  
Kulpsville, PA 19443  
Toll-Free Patient Line: (800) 548-9205  
[www.qirn4.org](http://www.qirn4.org)



Sources:

1. Cryotherapy intervention in relieving arteriovenous fistula cannulation-related pain among hemodialysis patients at the King Khalid Hospital, Tabuk, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Hamad S Al Amer, Wireen Leila Dator, Hamzeh Y Abunab, Mohammad Mari 2017 | Volume : 28 | Issue : 5 | Page : 1050-1056  
<https://bit.ly/30LRSsD>
2. Meditative Therapies for Reducing Anxiety: A Systematic Review and Metaanalysis of Randomized Controlled Trials\* Kevin W Chen, MPH, Ph.D, Christine C. Berger, Ph.D, [...], and C. W. Lejuez, Ph.D  
<https://bit.ly/3tu3Rr5>

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Ease the Ouch





## Nervous About Needles

If the mention of the word “needle” makes your heart race, brow sweat, or causes an uncomfortable feeling, you’re not alone.

We are aware that you have concerns about your access. Fear of needles can be a big problem. Even if you aren’t usually afraid of needle sticks, it’s normal to feel nervous about using your fistula or graft for the first time.

Many people avoid getting proper medical care because of this fear. Yet your choice of access is important to your well-being. It is your lifeline!

Don’t let your vascular access choice be influenced by fear or lack of information.

Let your unit healthcare staff help—discuss your concerns.

## Manage the Fear

Be specific about your fears. Identify and name them. For example, what about needles scare you: the size, that they will hurt? The first few times a needle is inserted into a new fistula are likely to be the most difficult.

To ease the ouch and make this experience more comfortable, your healthcare team MAY use:

- the most experienced staff for the first few sticks
- smaller needles at first
- only one needle for the first treatment

YOU can help manage your fear by:

- choosing “Not to Look”
- distracting yourself with pleasant thoughts
- taking control and learning to place your own needles

## Other Techniques



EMLA Cream is a topical cream that temporarily numbs the skin to prevent pain before needle insertion. It should be applied one hour prior to cannulation and covered so that it will stay in place.



Plastic wrap from the grocery store can be used to cover the cream and keep it in place. It should not be rubbed into the skin like lotion, but left to sit on top of the area to be cannulated.



Using too much EMLA cream can cause your blood pressure to drop, so be sure to follow your prescription and talk to your dialysis healthcare team about when, where, and how to use the cream before your first application.



You should wipe the cream off and wash your access before your technician preps your site. Don’t worry! It will stay numb for a little while after it is wiped off.



Ethyl chloride spray is another topical medication often used. It works by freezing and numbing the skin. If you choose this method, you must be careful not to use too much. It can cause skin breakdown over time if you spray too much.



Stop at the sink and wash your access before going to your dialysis chair. Make sure your technician preps your skin after you spray, as this medication is not sterile.