

# Keeping Your Baby Warm



A baby's body surface is about three times greater than an adult's. Babies are therefore not as adaptable as adults to temperature change. Babies can lose heat rapidly. When the baby's temperature is too low, he uses energy and oxygen to keep warm. On the other hand, a baby who is dressed in or covered by too many layers can easily become too warm, increasing the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). A baby who is too cold or too warm might be uncomfortable and fussy, and it may interrupt his sleep. It is therefore important to keep your baby at optimal temperature.

## *Normal temperature*

Ideally your baby's body temperature should be between 36.8 and 37.2 °C.  
≤ 36.5 °C: too cold                      ≥ 37.5 °C: too warm.

## *Assessing your baby's body temperature*

- The most accurate method to check your baby's body temperature is using a thermometer to take a rectal temperature
- Check your baby's neck. His neck should feel comfortable and warm. If he sweats a lot, then he's too warm
- Cold feet and hands don't necessarily mean that your baby is too cold

## *Avoid getting your baby too warm*

- Keep the room temperature between 16 and 18 °C (for a newborn baby it can be 20 °C)
- Don't let your baby sleep next to the radiator or in direct sunlight
- Don't overheat your baby with too many clothes or blankets
- Don't use a duvet, quilt or heavy blankets
- Use light cotton blankets and sheets. In cold weather it is better to use layers of thin bedding than one heavier blanket

## *Too warm or too cold*

Especially in the first week after birth your baby might be unable to regulate his temperature well. Check his temperature daily and follow the instructions below.

When the baby's temperature is < 36.8 °C you can start to get him warmer:

- Hold your baby skin-to-skin! This is the best way to help regulate your baby's temperature (See our handout "Skin-to-skin Contact")
- Dress the baby in one more layer of clothes or cover him with an extra blanket. Before use, put the clothes and blanket on the radiator or around a hot water bottle to warm it up.
- Pre-heat the baby's cot with a warm water bottle. Remove the bottle before putting the baby to sleep



Check the baby's temperature again after an hour. If his temperature hasn't come up **and** is  $< 36.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ , you might want to inform a doctor.

When your baby's temperature is  $\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ :

- Take off a layer of clothes and/or cover him with less blankets
- Check the room temperature
- The baby shouldn't wear gloves or a hat

Check the baby's temperature again after an hour.

If the temperature hasn't come down **or** is  $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ , you should inform a doctor.

### ***How warm should I dress my baby?***

The best guideline is to dress your newborn in the same number of layers you're wearing yourself, plus one.

Please be aware that the information provided is intended solely for general educational and informational purposes only. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician for any questions you may have regarding your medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have received in this program.

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