Other things to remember

It is important that you get used to monitoring your baby's temperature without a thermometer before you go home. The best place to feel how, hot/cold your baby is, would be by feeling the nape of his/her neck, or his/her tummy. Hands and feet are naturally cooler and so will not give you an accurate idea.

Further information on checking your baby's temperature and on room temperature when you get home can be accessed on The Lullaby Trust website: https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/baby-room-temperature/

References

Great Ormond Street for Children (2017) Thermoregulation for neonates 2017
University Hospitals of Leicester (2016) Thermal protection of the Newborn
WHO (1997) Thermal protection of the Newborn

This information leaflet was designed and produced by the East Midlands Neonatal Operational Delivery Network.

For further information on what we do, please visit our website; www.emnodn.nhs.uk

NHS

East Midlands Neonatal Operational Delivery Network

Taking your Baby's Temperature
on the Neonatal Unit & Transitional Care

Parent Information

September 2018

Why do we need to take a baby's temperature?

Newborn and preterm infants naturally have an immature temperature control. The ability for these babies to maintain their temperature is affected by gestational age, weight, illness and the environment. Due to this immature temperature control it is important that your baby's temperature is checked regularly.

Equipment

Ensure that the nurse helping you to care for your baby has shown you the thermometer used in your area and how to use it so that you know what to do. It is also important that you know how often your baby needs to have his/her temperature checked. For a baby in the nursery/low dependency environment the usual is 3 to 6 hourly as long as the previous temperature was within normal range.

Some thermometers require a cover to be placed over the probe before use, others maybe be single patient use. The nurse will explain which type you are using.

How to take a temperature

Place the tip of the thermometer in your baby's armpit, also known as axilla, and hold his/her arm down alongside his/her body. Ensure the thermometer is held down alongside the body. Make sure the tip is completely covered in the armpit. Wait for the thermometer to take the reading. The thermometer should beep when it is finished, but again check with the nurse for information about the thermometer you are using.

Temperature recording

The normal range for a temperature taken under the armpit is 36.5°C to 37.5°C. If you wish to record the temperature on your babies observation chart, the nurse will teach you how to do so.

If your baby's temperature falls outside the normal range, the nursing staff should be informed and readings may need taking more frequently. The nurse will tell you how often if this is the case.

What if your baby is too cold?

There are many ways to increase your baby's temperature if they are cold, and this will depend on many factors which can vary depending on the gestational age your baby was born at, and his/her current age. Other factors include the level of care the baby is receiving; the type of equipment used on the unit, how cold your baby is, how much support they are already receiving for temperature control and if they are being cared for in a cot or an incubator.

Inform the nurse helping you to care for your baby who may:

- Suggest skin to skin care
- Increase the incubator temperature
- Increase the incubator humidity (if used)
- Place on a hot cot/heated mattress
- Place under a radiant warmer
- Put on extra items of clothing
- Put on an extra blanket

What if your baby is too warm?

If your baby's temperature is higher than the normal range the most common cause is due to the environment that he/she is in.

Inform the nurse helping you to care for your baby who may:

- Turn the incubator temperature down by 0.5°C at 30-60 minute intervals
- Turn down the hot cot
- Remove blanket(s)
- Remove items of clothing