

Keeping Your Baby Warm

This leaflet explains the importance of keeping your baby warm. If you have any further questions, please speak to the midwife caring for you.

Why is temperature important?

Leaving the warmth of the womb at birth, your baby comes into a much colder environment and they can start to lose heat as soon as they are born. They will also be wet, which means that they can drop their temperature and become cold very quickly.

Most of this heat loss occurs within the first few minutes after birth. If your baby is not kept warm in the first 10-20 minutes, they may lose enough heat for their body temperature to fall to a low level (hypothermia) and this might result in admission to the neonatal unit.

The normal temperature in babies is between 36.5 and 37.4 degrees Celsius. Above 37.5 degrees Celsius is high temperature.

Is my baby at risk of getting cold?

Some babies are more at risk of getting cold, these include:

- Preterm babies born at less than 37 weeks' gestation.
- Babies with low birth weight.
- Babies of mothers who are diabetic.
- Babies who need to be resuscitated at birth.
- Babies where the mother has an infection in labour.

However, **all** babies are susceptible to hypothermia in the first few hours after the birth, so it is important to take simple measures after the birth to keep your baby warm.

At the time of your baby's birth

When babies are born, they cannot regulate their own temperature. It is important that parents and carers do this for them.

At the time of your baby's birth, your midwife will help your baby to stay warm by:

- Keeping the room warm (the air conditioning and any fans in the birth room need to be turned off or facing away from the baby; windows should be closed and heaters turned on if appropriate).
- After the birth, your baby will be dried immediately and the staff will put a hat on your baby.
- Warming up towels and clothing for your baby.

When your baby is born

- With your consent, we will place your baby on your chest to have skin-to-skin contact with you. This will help to keep your baby warm. During skin-to-skin, it is important to support your baby's head and to keep their face clear to allow them to breathe clearly. You will be encouraged to have uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact with your baby unless the staff are concerned about you or your baby. Please keep your baby covered in blankets during skin-to-skin to help reduce heat loss.
- The midwife caring for you will check your baby's temperature and will offer you support to feed your baby.
- Whilst it is important to keep your baby warm, it is possible for them to overheat. Please speak to staff if your baby feels cold or hot to the touch.

On the postnatal ward

- Make sure that when your baby is skin-to-skin, they are covered in blankets.
- When dressing your baby for the first time, make sure the clothes and blankets have been kept in a warm place (away from windows).
- When in the cot, ensure that your baby is covered adequately. Babies usually need one or two more layers of clothing or bedding than adults.
- Tell us if you think your baby is not warm enough; they should feel slightly warm to touch, although hands and feet can sometimes feel a little cooler.

At home

Babies don't need especially warm rooms. Keep the room at a comfortable temperature for you in light clothing.

- Check your baby regularly to make sure they are not too hot or too cold.
- You can use a baby thermometer or feel their forehead, tummy or back of their neck.
- If your baby feels too warm, remove one or two layers.
- If your baby feels too cool, put on some layers and give them a cuddle.
- If your baby's temperature drops below 36 degrees Celsius, please phone the Maternity Helpline, your community midwife, GP service or NHS 111 for advice. You may also attend A&E anytime if you have any concerns with your baby.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your baby's temperature, please contact the Maternity Helpline on 020 8725 2777. This is a telephone advice and assessment line run by midwives. They can provide advice, reassurance and support if you have any urgent concerns.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

