

During pregnancy your body ensures your baby is kept at the right temperature. Baby's temperature regulation systems are turned off while they are in utero as they are not needed.

Once your baby is born it will take 24 to 48 hours for baby to begin to control their own temperature. Adults can sweat when they are hot to cool themselves down. If they are too cold they can shiver and move about to make themselves warmer. Babies are unable to do this and their parents or carers need to make sure they do not become too hot or too cold.

What should my baby's temperature be?

A healthy body temperature for a baby is between 36.6- 37 °C. You should aim to keep your baby's temperature in this range. Your baby should look pink and feel warm to the touch. Your baby's hands and feet will usually feel cooler, which is normal and they should not be used to assess overall temperature.

If your baby becomes too cold they will use their food and oxygen to stay warm, and not to grow. If your baby becomes too hot they will begin to dehydrate and become unwell. If baby's temperature is kept between 36.6 - 37 °C your baby will grow well.

Holding baby close to your body while they are feeding warms baby. In the first few days after baby's birth, feeding your baby frequently with them close to your body will help them stay warm.

Remember that every baby is different and you will need to check on your baby regularly.

How will I know if my baby is too hot?

Your baby may have a red face and be irritable. When you feel baby's tummy or the back of your baby's neck it would feel hot and sweaty. If your baby's skin is hot or sweaty, remove one or more layers of bedding.

How will I know my baby is too cold?

Your baby may have paler facial skin, blue lips, not be feeding as well or is less active than usual. Touch the skin on baby's tummy and back to see if it feels unusually cold.

How can I warm up my cold baby?

The quickest way is to undress your baby and to put them in skin to skin contact with an adult (keep baby's nappy on). Cover baby and the adult over with a woollen blanket and let them sit back and relax. Baby should become warm within half an hour.

Can I use a thermometer to take my baby's temperature?

If you are worried that your baby is too hot or too cold you can take their temperature using a thermometer. If you would like to buy a thermometer there are many different types available at various costs. Your local pharmacy staff will be able to help you choose the most suitable one for you to use with your baby. Baby's temperature should be between 36.6 - 37°C.

How hot should baby's room be?

Babies do well when the room temperature is constant at about 16 - 20 °C. Babies do not like being in very cold or very hot rooms.

What type of clothing and bedding is best for my baby?

Natural fibres e.g. cotton, wool or bamboo are best. These natural fibres trap warm air while still letting moisture through. This keeps baby keeps warm and dry.

Polar fleece, synthetic and polyester fabrics are made from plastic based fibres. These fibres keep the moisture in and let warm air through. This makes baby cold and damp. While cotton and wool clothes are more expensive to buy than those

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made with synthetic fabrics, if they are washed carefully they will last several babies.

The more natural fibres baby's clothing and bedding contains the better. Some baby clothes are 50 – 80% blends of natural and synthetic fibres. Cotton sheets and cotton or wool blankets are best on your baby's bed.

Pure wool clothing should be gently hand washed in warm water and a wool detergent. Dry the clothing flat and out of the sun (especially hand knitting). This will help the clothing last longer and keep its ability to keep your baby warm. Cotton clothing can be washed in the washing machine.

Try to avoid drying clothing in a clothes dryer as it can cause the clothing to shrink and matt. Shrunken and matted clothing is not as good at keeping baby warm and dry.

How many layers of clothing should my baby wear?

A newborn baby (especially in the winter) needs to wear a cotton and a wool singlet (vest), a gown (or stretch'n'grow), booties (or socks) and a cardigan. When baby is taken out of their bed they need to be wrapped in a cotton or woollen cuddly blanket.

As the daytime temperature warms up, take layers of clothing off your baby. Later in the day as the temperature begins to cool down put extra clothing layers on your baby. The amount of clothing baby wears depends on baby's birth weight and the time of year. Your baby will stay warmer in several lightweight layers of clothing than one or two thick layers.

Should I warm my baby's bed?

Newborn babies sleep better in a warm dry bed. Air and dry your baby's bedding every day. Pre-warm baby's bed (if possible) before settling your baby in their bed.

Do not leave hot water bottles or wheat packs in bed with your baby as they could cause burns.

What should my baby wear when going outdoors?

When baby is taken outside they will need to wear a hat and jacket over their clothes, and then be wrapped in a blanket.

What should I bring into hospital for my baby?

To help you keep your baby warm after birth, please bring the following:

- 3 cotton singlet's (vests) and 3 wool singlet's
- 3 stretch'n'grows or baby gowns
- 2 wool cardigans
- Booties or socks
- Cotton cuddlies and a cotton or wool blanket
- A hat and jacket for taking baby home

If you have questions about heating, clothing or bedding, ask your LMC, midwife or nurse.

Contact us

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