

# I am going home! How do I keep my baby warm?

Information for parents and carers

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Congratulations! Your baby is now ready to go home! The transition from hospital to home is a big step for you, your baby, and your family. It is not unusual to feel a mixture of emotions including nervous, relief, fear, and happiness about taking your baby home for the first time from the Neonatal Unit. Remember, your baby is only going home because they are well enough to leave the unit and reasonably good at controlling their own body temperature. It is a time for celebration!

## Keeping your baby warm

Babies are unable to regulate their body temperature like you and I can. If they are very small or born premature, they may find it difficult to keep warm. Maintaining a stable body temperature is especially important for them.

A baby born prematurely, or with a low birth weight has very little fat, which enables them to control the rate at which they lose heat, leaving them vulnerable to becoming cold very quickly.

Your baby's normal central temperature range should be between 36.5 and 37.4 degrees.

## Frequently asked questions

### What temperature should the room be?

It is important to make sure that your baby's room is a comfortable temperature. The chance of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is higher in babies who get too hot, so try to keep the room temperature between 16-20c.

If your baby still weighs below 2.5kg, they may still need to be kept a bit warmer, they may need to wear cardigan indoors or have extra blanket. It may take some time for your baby to adjust to their new home temperature.

## What should my baby wear?

To keep babies warm they should always have a minimum of two layers of clothing on. This should be made up of a vest, a baby grow and one or two blankets.

Remember one blanket folded in half counts as two layers, therefore 1 folded blanket with one small single layer blanket would make 3 layers.

A cardigan may be a useful addition, hats are not required to be worn indoors.

### **On a hot day:**

Dress your baby in a single layer of clothing, preferably cotton, with a sun hat. Babies are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the sun as their skin does not contain enough pigment to protect them from sunburn. Keep babies under 6 months out of the sun. Don't forget a sun hat.

### **On a cold day:**

Several layers are better than 1 thick layer as the trapped air provides insulation. Be careful not to over wrap your baby.

Make sure your baby is well wrapped while out but remember to take the extra clothing off when you get in a warm place to prevent your baby from overheating even if asleep.

## How do I know if my baby is too hot or too cold?

If your baby is too hot, they may be irritable, sweaty, hot to touch and may breathe faster than usual. A cold baby may be unusually quiet, pale or slightly blue, cold to touch and may refuse feeds. Cool hands and feet are **not** a good guide to your baby's temperature so check by feeling their back and chest with your hand. They should be warm to touch.

To measure your baby's temperature, it is recommended that you use a digital thermometer under your baby's arm (ensure it is placed firmly under the arm against skin for accurate result).

### When may I take my baby out?

There is no reason why you should not take your baby out if dressed according to weather conditions. Some babies are more prone to infection and if possible, avoid rush hours when going out or going to crowded areas. It is also wise to avoid contact with anyone who is ill.

### Walking

If you use a pram, make sure your baby can lie down with their back flat. If you wish to use a sling, make sure your baby is secure and will not fall through.

### In a car

The only safe way for your baby to travel is in a properly secured baby seat. It is unsafe and illegal to hold a baby while sitting in a car, even with a safety belt around you and your baby.

Babies can overheat in a car seat if overdressed. Do not wrap in a blanket or heavy clothing such as snow or pramsuits, before going into a car seat. A blanket may be placed over the top once secured in the seat. Remove headwear to allow any excess heat to be lost from the head.

### Can I swaddle my baby?

Please refer to the Lullaby Trust which has all the information you need for safe swaddling and how to swaddle a baby.



### Swaddling your baby and using slings - The Lullaby Trust:

[www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/product-information/swaddling-slings/](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/product-information/swaddling-slings/)

Use thin swaddling materials, such as large swaddle muslins.



Do not use blankets and use minimal clothing layers if choosing to swaddle your baby.

## When do I start to bath my baby?

Do not be in a hurry to give your baby a bath. Regular bathing is not necessary in first few weeks whilst your baby is small. Babies get cold quickly and use lots of energy to warm up again.

When your baby is born, they have a white, creamy, natural substance covering their skin called vernix caseosa. This provides natural protection to your newborn. It does not need to be scrubbed away after birth.

### Topping and tailing

Wash your baby's face, neck, creases under the neck and bottom carefully every day.

Avoid using any oils or lotions until your baby is at least 1 month old.

### When to bath

Bath your baby when they are awake and contented and not crying for a feed or straight after a feed. Get everything ready before you start and make sure the room is warm enough.

### Tips

Test the water to ensure it is comfortably warm (37-38c) or by checking with our elbow.

- Keep bath short in duration
- Wash hair last to avoid heat loss
- Ensure you have a warm towel ready to dry the baby
- **Never leave your baby alone in the bath.**

## Safe Sleep

The safest sleeping position for a baby is on their back in their own cot or Moses basket.

Babies cannot regulate their temperature and are vulnerable to overheating, ensure your baby is not overdressed for sleep.

Overheating is known risk factor of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), ensuring the room is maintained at the right temperature and babies are not overdressed for sleep will reduce risk.

Please refer to Lullaby Trust for more information:

### **The best sleeping position for a baby - The Lullaby Trust**

[www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/safer-sleep-basics/sleeping-position/](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/safer-sleep-basics/sleeping-position/)



You can also speak with health visitor if you have any concerns.

## Other ways babies can lose heat

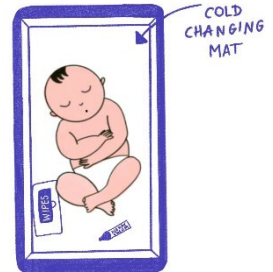
**Convection** – this involves heat loss or gain by air motion.

*Think about fans or open windows and doors.  
Ensure baby cot are placed away from windows or draughty areas in the home.*



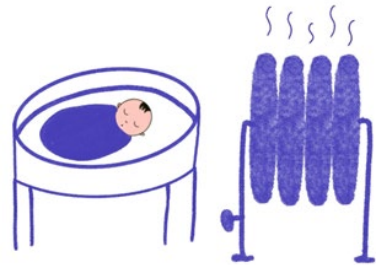
**Conduction** – this involves heat transfer from one object to another by actual contact.

*Think about a cold mattress or changing mat.  
Placing towel over cold surface will reduce this.*



**Radiation** – this involves the transfer of radiant energy from the body surface to surrounding cooler surfaces.

*Think about a cot being placed next to an outside wall or near a cold window.*



**Evaporation** – this implies a loss of heat by moisture vaporizing from the surface of the skin.

*Think about heat loss where the baby is not properly dried after a bath. Heat can be gained with a warm towel.*



## **If you are concerned your baby is unwell**

If you become concerned that your baby has a fever or persistent cool temperatures which are unable to be resolved, or your baby has any other signs you are worried about, please seek medical advice with your GP, or if necessary, call 999.

We recommend you download the below app:

### **The Baby Check App - The Lullaby Trust**

[www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/infection-and-illness/baby-check-app/](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/infection-and-illness/baby-check-app/)



**Finally, we hope you enjoy being home at last with your baby. We wish you a very happy transition!**