Prevention of Hypothermia in the Immediate Newborn Period
Quality Improvement Action Plan

Babies <31 Weeks Gestation

- Use warmer bag (plastic/polyethylene bag).
- Prepare resuscitaire and switch on heater.
- Heater should be increased before delivery as deemed necessary.
- Place warmer bag on resuscitaire.
- Unfold warmer bag to half its length. Folded area will provide a firm circular structure to keep the bag open when putting the baby inside.
- Ask midwife/obstetrician to clamp the umbilical cord with a plastic clamp (forceps should not be attached).
- Transfer the baby quickly but SAFELY to the resuscitaire. Loosely cover the baby WITHOUT drying him/her during the transfer to resuscitaire.
- Aim to put the newborn baby inside the bag within 30 – 40 seconds from the time of clamping the umbilical cord.
- DO NOT at any time DRY the baby's body.
- One person will need to hold the folded area of the bag firmly in place.
- A second person puts the baby inside the bag with the legs in first. Hold the baby in your forearm supporting the head whilst folding the baby’s arms in the midline.
- Once inside the bag, unfold the bag and cover the baby up to the neck area.
- Now DRY the baby’s head and put a hat on (appropriate size).
- DO NOT COVER the baby with towels. The radiant heat needs to get to the baby and the moisture inside the bag will help to keep the baby warm.
- ASSESS the baby’s VITAL SIGNS. (It is possible to accomplish the above tasks within 50 seconds.)
- STABILISE the baby as clinically required.
- Place the servo-control temperature probe (with the right surface of the probe to the skin) from the resuscitaire on the baby’s back between the scapulae. Secure this with a tape. Alternatively, hold it to the skin if the tape does not stick properly.
- A saturation probe can be attached to the baby by making a small cut/tear to the warmer bag.
- DO NOT move the baby to transport incubator until the temperature probe reads at least 36.5°C.
- Once inside the incubator in the Neonatal Unit, keep the plastic bag until the temperature is optimal (>36.5°C).
- If procedures are being carried out such as an umbilical catheterisation, leave the warmer bag until the procedures are completed and the temperature is optimal.
Babies 31 – 34 Weeks Gestation

- Switch on radiant heater.
- Dry the baby (including the head) and remove the wet towel.
- Wrap with WARM towel.
- Put on a correct size hat.
- For the following babies, use servo-control temperature probe and attach it on the back between the scapula:
  - All babies <37 weeks gestation
  - SGA (Small for gestational age) babies or <200 g.
  - Unwell babies (eg respiratory distress, meconium aspiration, etc)
- If the temperature is <36.5°C, unwrap the baby AND allow the radiant heater to reach the baby.
- When the temperature is >36.5°C, wrap the baby again in a warm towel.
- In the ‘high risk’ babies described above, recheck the temperature at regular intervals to prevent hypothermia, especially if they are not admitted to the Neonatal Unit for further care.

Term Babies

Prior to delivery:

- Ensure a warm draught free environment (ideally 25°C) prior to and following delivery.
- Position the resuscitaire away from doors and vents.
- Warm towels for the midwife to dry baby at birth.
- Warm resuscitation surface, spare towels and hat under the radiant heater.

Following delivery:

- Dry baby with warm towels.
- Facilitate early skin to skin.
- Apply a well fitting hat.
- Cover baby with a warm blanket.
- During skin to skin warm baby clothes, blankets and cot surface under radiant heater.
- After skin to skin contact dress baby in warm clothes including a hat and wrap in warm blankets.
- Lay baby on warmed cot surface and cover with warmed blankets if not being held.
- Check axilla temperature within 1 hour of birth.
- If axilla temperature is sub optimum (<36.5°C) initiate Treatment of Hypothermia protocol.
- Provide continuing staff and parental education.