



BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Parent Information Sheet: [Therapeutic Hypothermia or Whole Body Cooling for Newborns](#)

What is therapeutic hypothermia?

Therapeutic hypothermia (or whole body cooling) is the process of cooling the baby's body temperature to 33.5° C (92.3° F) to help lessen or prevent brain injury. The baby is placed on a cooling mattress with his/her temperature monitored very closely. The treatment lasts up to 72 hours, after which your baby is slowly re-warmed to natural body temperature.

Why do some babies receive this treatment?

An infant born at 34 weeks or older may receive whole body cooling if the NICU team is concerned your baby experienced a decrease in oxygen or blood delivery to his/her brain. Cerebral (brain) protection is the goal of this therapy.

What happens during therapeutic hypothermia?

Cooling starts as soon as possible within the first 6 hours of life. An EEG (electroencephalogram) is done by placing sticky leads on the baby's head and looking at his/her brain waves. Your baby will need an IV placed. He/she may also need a special long IV placed in his/her umbilical cord to provide nutrition and easy access for blood draws. Your baby may need a small dose of medicine to keep him/her comfortable during the treatment. After 72 hrs of therapy, your baby's body temperature is slowly warmed back to normal. This "re-warming" takes 15 hours.

Can I hold my baby during therapeutic hypothermia?

Yes!!!!

What are the benefits of therapeutic hypothermia?

Therapeutic hypothermia has been shown to improve survival and neurologic outcomes. If a baby has experienced a decrease in oxygen or blood flow to the brain, the brain cells can be injured. Cooling gives the brain cells time to heal before needing to work at full speed.

Are there any risks associated with therapeutic hypothermia?

There have been several studies looking at the risks of whole body cooling. No major risks have been found.

What if I have more questions?

Ask, ask, ask!!!!

Whole Body Cooling Highlights

- For babies born at 34 weeks or older
- Body temperature is cooled to 33.5 C or 92.3 F
- Lasts for up to 72 hrs
- Helps to lessen or prevent brain injury
- An MRI is done at the end of therapy
- EEG is monitored



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