Purpose

1. To ensure newborn safety and comfort.
2. To outline practices to ensure water temperatures for initial newborn baths fall within the established safe water temperature range for all staff assisted baths on the postpartum units.

Principles

The World Health Organization (2013) recommends that Initial newborn bathing be delayed for at least SIX HOURS after birth and should not be considered until the newborn is stable (ie. thermoregulation, respirations, circulation, glucose levels).

Late preterm infant bathing must not be considered before 24 – 36 hours due to an increased risk of cold stress and hypoglycemia in this population.

If the newborn’s mother is infected with HIV, Hepatitis B or other blood borne pathogens, the newborn will be bathed as soon as the temperature is stable (see below); this may be prior to six hours of age.

Applicability

Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses

Procedure

1. Delay bath if the newborn is experiencing any symptoms that may indicate that their transition to extra-uterine life is not occurring normally:
   a. Low chemstrips
   b. Low temperature
   c. Poor tone
   d. Respiratory difficulties or increased effort
   e. 5 minute APGAR less than seven (NO bathing before newborn is 24 hours of age AND feeding well)

2. Newborn’s axilla temperature must be taken prior to the bath.
   a. Range of normal newborn temperatures:
      i. 36.5 – 37.2 degrees Celsius (Axilla)
      ii. 37.0 – 37.7 degrees Celsius (Core - temporal artery thermometer)

5. If the temperature is < 36.5 degrees (axilla) or < 37.0 (temporal), do not bath. Newborn should be placed in skin-to-skin care.
   a. Complete a full newborn assessment (apical pulse, respiratory rate,
assess circulation and tone, assessment of behavior and feeding). Re-check temperature in 30 minutes.

6. If temperature remains < 36.5 degrees (axilla) or < 37.0 (temporal) after 30 minutes, do a complete newborn assessment, including:
   a. respirations
   b. cardiovascular function (pulses, color, heart rate)
   c. blood sugar (consider; see “Glucose Screening Newborn – Hypoglycemia” policy)

   **If any of the above is abnormal, notify the attending physician.**

3. If the temperature is within the normal ranges above, the newborn may be bathed in a warm environment without drafts and placed in skin-to-skin care immediately following the bath.

   If the newborn is not placed in skin-to-skin care following the bath, a post-bath temperature should be taken within 15 – 30 minutes and recorded on the Newborn Care Map.

4. The bath will be done in an approved clean tub. **NOTE: Submersion bathing causes less temperature fluctuation than sponge bathing.**

7. SAFE BATH WATER TEMPERATURES FOR A NEWBORN (0 – 1 month):
   
   **Safe water temperature range – 37.0 degrees Celsius to 38.0 degrees Celsius**

8. To test bath water temperature, use an approved hospital bath thermometer.
   a. Water temperature is tested by **observing the thermometer in the water once the tub is filled.**
   b. Read the thermometer and ensure that the temperature is within the safe limit.
   c. Remove thermometer from tub prior to submerging newborn in the water.
   d. Clean thermometer with appropriate hospital disinfectant after use.
   e. Store thermometer on clean bath cart after use.
   e. Water temperature must be recorded on the Newborn Care Map following the bath.

9. Gloves must be worn when handling newborns until initial bath is complete (as per Infection Control Guidelines). However, staff may choose to continue to wear gloves after the bath, as bathing does not completely remove all potential pathogens from delivery.

10. Please use the Episencial® “Baby Time Playful Wash” only and ensure all soap is thoroughly rinsed from the newborn’s skin. Vernix is beneficial to the skin and should not be removed.
11. Document initial bath on *Newborn Care Map*.

**Definitions**

**Late Preterm Infant** – newborn between 34⁶ and 36⁶ weeks gestation (UpToDate, 2015).

**Vernix** – a white, cream cheese-like substance that serves as a skin lubricant; usually noticeable on a newborn’s skin at birth in a term neonate (Pillitteri, 2003).

**Related Documents**


**References**


