

**Effect of Bathing on Temperature of Normal Neonates**

It is widely believed that bathing is a cause for heat loss in a neonate, which may result in hypothermia and its complications. This study was aimed at observing the effect of bathing on the temperature of healthy term neonates.

Thirty five normal newborns with weight more than 2 kg and gestational age more than 37 weeks who were in the maternity ward, with their mothers, were studied. Temperatures were recorded 30 minutes before bath, immediately after bath and 1 hr after bath. The temperature of the room in which the baby was kept and given bath was between 29°C and 32°C.

Axillary temperatures were recorded for convenience and simplicity. It has been found that axillary temperature is an accurate estimate of body temperature in most instances(1,2). Temperatures were recorded using a low reading mercury-in-glass thermometer placed in the roof of the left axilla, with the arm held against the infant's side for 3 minutes(3). Axillary temperature below 36.5°C was defined as hypothermia and temperature below 35 °C as severe hypothermia (4). Bathing of babies was performed by nursing trainees. Babies were often kept uncovered before bathing. They were bathed with warm water, dried with a towel, and then wrapped. The entire procedure took 3 to 5 minutes.

Hypothermia was found in 9 out of 35 babies before bath and 26 babies had normal temperature.

The reason for this could be that the babies were kept uncovered before bath. Among the 26 normo-thermic babies, 16 had normal temperature immediately after bath and 10 had hypothermia. Only 1 baby persisted to have hypothermia. The reasons for post-bath hypothermia in a significant number of babies could be prolonged bath time, inadequate wiping, damp linen, and not covering the baby properly, especially the head.

Since our study has shown that bathing does cause hypothermia, the need for daily bathing of babies in the maternity ward should be reconsidered.

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