

Temperature



The chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is higher in babies who get too hot. Research has shown that the level of bedding and clothing was higher among babies who died of SIDS, than those who did not.

Avoid letting your baby get too hot

It is important that your baby does not get too hot or too cold when they sleep. A baby sleeping bag or well-fitting sheets and blankets are all you should need to keep them warm - never use duvets, quilts or pillows for babies under one year. Bear in mind, a folded blanket provides twice the insulation. Your baby should only need to wear a nappy, vest and sleep suit to sleep in. They should not wear a hat or gloves for sleep, even if they may have done so whilst being cared for in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, if they happened to be premature.

You should check your baby's body temperature by looking for sweating or by feeling your baby's tummy, back or neck – your baby's hands and feet will usually be cooler and that's normal. If your baby is hot, remove one or more layers of bedclothes. Babies who are unwell with a fever need fewer, not more, bedclothes.

It is important to make sure that your baby is a comfortable temperature – not too hot or too cold

A room temperature of 16–20°C is ideal for your baby, when growing up in the UK. This feels quite cold to a lot of people, so using a room thermometer can help check the temperature. If you are using light bedding such as sheets and blankets, they should be tucked in carefully with no loose ends that could obstruct your baby's breathing. Similarly, baby sleeping bags should be well fitted, especially around the neck and arms, but comfortable, so your baby cannot wriggle down inside.

A normal temperature in babies and children is about 36.4°C (97.5F), but this can vary slightly. A fever is usually considered to be a temperature of 38°C (100.4F) or above. It is recommended that you use a digital thermometer under your baby's arm to measure their temperature. Seek medical advice if your baby is under three months old and has a temperature over 38°C or if you are worried about their health.



A room temperature of 16-20°C, with light bedding or a lightweight well-fitting sleeping bag, is comfortable and safe for sleeping babies

Advice on room temperature is intended as a guide. Every baby is different so while it's important to be informed about overheating, you need to check your baby regularly to see if he or she is too hot or too cold.

Research corner

Research has shown that overheating arising from excessive insulation, high room temperature (overwrapping) or both, is associated with an increased risk of SIDS. While it is important to ensure that a baby does not get too cold, it is also important to avoid any practice which may lead your baby to get too hot. Babies should be checked to ensure they are at a suitable temperature. There is a consensus view in the UK that an optimum room temperature of 16-20°C, combined with light bedding or a lightweight well-fitting baby sleep bag, offers a comfortable and safe environment for sleeping babies. It is also important to ensure that your baby's head stays uncovered while they are sleeping.

Frequently asked questions



How can I check if my baby is too hot?

The best way to check on your baby's temperature is by putting your hand on the skin on their tummy or the back of their neck. Don't use their hands or feet as a guide as they will always feel cooler than the rest of their body. If your baby is too hot you will feel the skin is hot, slightly clammy or sweaty, and you will need to remove some .

I'm worried about my baby overheating in warm weather, what can I do?

We appreciate how difficult it can be to keep your baby's room between the ideal 16-20°C in the warmer months, knowing that overheating can pose a risk. If the room where the baby sleeps is difficult to cool, follow the 'summer rules' of lighter bedding and clothing and open the bedroom door and a window, if it is safe to do so. You might also like to use a fan to cool the room, but don't aim it directly on the baby. It is also important to ensure that your baby has sufficient fluids if bottle-fed, by offering cooled, boiled water to babies under six months or just water from the tap for babies over six months. Fully breastfed babies don't need any extra water until they start eating solid food.

My home is below the ideal temperature in the winter, should I keep the heating on all night?

It is rarely necessary to keep your heating on all night, and adding an extra layer will usually help. Remember not to add a hat to your baby when they are indoors, as their head is important for maintaining their body temperature by releasing heat. If you do feel your home is too cold and you want to leave the heating on all night, make sure it is set at a low temperature, and certainly no higher than 20°C.

Why do babies who are unwell need fewer layers?

When babies feel unwell, with a cold or fever, they may be warmer than usual. It is important that you put fewer layers on an unwell baby so they have the opportunity to lower their body temperature – don't feel tempted to wrap an unwell baby up more than usual. If your baby shows signs of being significantly unwell you should seek medical advice. You may also find it helpful to use our Baby Check guide to monitor your baby's symptoms, which is available on our website.

More information

You can buy a room thermometer from our website for just £3.

Visit www.lullabytrust.org.uk/shop

