

## Patient information

### **Keeping Warm Before Surgery (Perioperative Hypothermia)**

General Surgery Department – Aintree Hospital

#### **What is Perioperative Hypothermia?**

The perioperative period is the time surrounding your surgical procedure - This includes the time you spend on the ward before and after surgery, as well as the operation itself.

This period will vary between patients depending on the needs of their care.

Hypothermia means an abnormally low body temperature, a core body temperature of less than 36°C.

The core temperature is the temperature of your organs such as your heart and liver, and it is normally a little higher than that at the places where your temperature is taken, such as your mouth or ear.

#### **Why do I need to keep warm while I am in hospital?**

Research has shown that patients, who are kept warm throughout their hospital stay, have improved recovery time.

#### **If you are not warm before surgery it may lead to an increased chance of:**

- Blood loss.
- Wound infection.
- Heart problems.
- Bed sores.

For some operations, patients may have their temperature deliberately lowered for medical reasons. This is known as Therapeutic Hypothermia.

#### **What do the staff do to keep me warm?**

We will make sure you always have enough bedding and that the hospital environment is kept at a constantly warm temperature.

Your nurse will assess your risk of getting cold. If you are at higher risk extra blankets can be provided and other strategies can be employed to help you.

Your nurse will also measure and record your temperature at least once in the hour before your operation.

Your temperature will be monitored during your operation and then every four hours when you arrive back on the ward.

### **What can I do to keep warm?**

The hospital environment will be very different from your home. Although we do our best to maintain a constant temperature within the hospital, you may find it is different from what you are used to.

We recommend that if you are coming into the hospital for a surgical operation, you bring the following clothing with you to help keep you warm:

- A dressing gown.
- A vest.
- Warm bed clothing.
- Fitted slippers.

### **What do I do if I feel cold?**

It is important that you let the nurse or doctor know if you feel cold. Extra blankets can be provided and other measures, such as an air blanket where warm air is blown over you, may be taken by staff if they know you are cold.

### **What happens if I am cold just before I go for my operation?**

The nurse will take your temperature at least once before you are taken for your operation. If you have a temperature that is below normal, 36°C, your operation may be delayed for your safety, until you are warm.

During your operation your surgical team will monitor your temperature and ensure that you remain warm throughout.

### **Is it important to keep warm after my operation?**

Yes. After your operation it is equally important that you ensure you stay warm as this will aid your recovery.

### **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## Further Information

### Where can I get more information?

If you want further information about the importance of being warm in hospital, please ask the nursing staff looking after you.

You can also find details and advice on this and other topics, on the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) website: [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk). Details about keeping warm can be found under the topic "Perioperative hypothermia (inadvertent)" reference CG65.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England Patient Liaison Group can also provide you with more information:  
[www.rcseng.ac.uk/patient\\_information/plg](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/patient_information/plg)  
Tel: 0207 869 6043

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