5 Minute Flashcards
Card 1: Perioperative hypothermia

Gloucestershire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Starter quickfire questions

1. What is normal body temperature?
2. And what is hypothermia?
3. Why do patients get cold perioperatively?

True or False?

Perioperative hypothermia increases the chance of:

1. Surgical site infections?
2. Rubbish music choices in theatre?
3. Pain?
4. Finishing the list on time?
5. Blood loss?
6. Cardiac events?

What do our guidelines say?

1. When should we measure temperature continuously, rather than intermittent ear probe measurement?
2. When should we use a forced air blanket? ('Bair Hugger')

Time for some roleplay…

Scrub nurse plays anaesthetist; surgeon plays ODP

The next case will take 2 hours. The patient is 85 and has a starting temperature of 36.0^{o}C. The anaesthetist says a single blanket will do. The ODP thinks we should use a forced air blanket.

How would you challenge this?

Card 1: Perioperative hypothermia

Gloucestershire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Starter quickfire questions

1. Normal body temperature is 36.7 to 37.1°C. Women's core temperatures are approximately 0.2°C higher than men's, but they have colder peripheries. Cold hands… warm heart!
2. Core temperature <36.0°C
3. Lots of reasons, including:
   Long waits for surgery on cold wards, often wearing just a gown
   Anaesthesia (general or spinal) causes blood vessels to dilate, exposing more blood to the skin, where heat is lost.
   Also, under anaesthesia, patients are less effective at maintaining their own temperature by shivering and vasoconstricting, and they can't put on extra clothes!

True or False?

1. True… normothermia is recommended by NICE for preventing SSI. Normothermic patients have increased collagen at the wound site and faster wound healing.
2. Only if someone puts on the Frozen soundtrack
3. True. Shivering increases post-op pain
4. False
5. True, it causes coagulopathy and increases transfusion requirements
6. True: hypothermia increases risk of morbid cardiac events.

What do our guidelines say?

1. For operations that lasting >30 minutes.
2. When the operation will last >2 hours, or >1 hour if the patient is particularly exposed (i.e. not mostly under drapes). And *always* for patients with a history of ischaemic heart disease.

Further reading:

NICE Guideline: *Hypothermia: prevention and management in adults having surgery* (2016 update)
GHNHST Guideline: *Perioperative hypothermia* (2021 update)