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# 5 Minute Flashcards Card 1: Perioperative hypothermia



# Starter quickfire questions

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

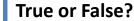


## Time for some roleplay...

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°C. The anaesthetist says a single blanket will do. The ODP thinks we should use a forced air blanket.

How would you challenge this?



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')



# **Card 1: Perioperative hypothermia**



# Starter quickfire questions

- 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)