



Holding Your Baby During Therapeutic Hypothermia (Cooling)

Cooling Your Baby to Protect Their Brain

Your baby has qualified for therapeutic hypothermia (cooling) because they may have a diagnosis called Hypoxic Ischemic Encephalopathy (HIE).

They will stay on a cooling bed or device set at 33.5°C for 72 hours in order to minimize potential damage to their brain and reduce inflammation.



Holding Your Baby During Cooling

Studies have shown that holding during cooling has many benefits for babies and parents:

- Reduces stress
- Increases bonding
- Increases oxytocin and milk production for mothers planning to breastfeed
- Increases parental confidence and empowerment
- Stabilizes baby's vital signs
- Touch soothes irritable babies
- Holding helps settle baby to conserve energy and promote brain healing



When You Can Hold

Not being able to hold your baby is a difficult time that no parent imagines. Babies with HIE in cooling can be transferred to their parents' lap as early as 24 hours after cooling begins.

If your baby is unstable, or you wish to "cuddle" your baby before the 24 hour mark, we will show you how!

Preparing for Polar Bear Care

- You will be encouraged to use the bathroom, eat, or pump prior to holding your baby.
- You may want to have long sleeves to keep your arms warm.
- A nurse will position a chair next to your baby's bed. Once you are seated, they will place a pillow or stack of blankets on your lap.
- Some cables will be temporarily disconnected from your baby to make the move easier. It's normal and safe to be momentarily unplugged from certain equipment.
- There will be a few more people in the room to help with the transfer and ensure it goes smoothly and safely. They are pros!
- Once the team is ready, and the lines and tubings are secure, they will move your baby to your lap while still on the cooling equipment.
- Once settled, they will secure additional pieces of equipment and ensure you and your polar bear cub are comfortable.

Safety in Polar Bear Care

- Multiple studies and clinical practice has demonstrated that holding your baby during cooling is safe.
- You can hold your baby in the ways described here without worrying about raising the temperature or negatively impacting their vital signs
- Holding *benefits* your baby and you! That's why we encourage it.
- There is always a nurse keeping a close eye on the vital signs and ensuring you both remain safe and comfortable.



What Can I Do During Holding?

- Hold your baby's hands or feet. Place a steady hand over the abdomen. The warmth of your hands is very comforting.
- You may hold your baby's head or under their shoulders. Be sure to ask a nurse for help with this as there may be extra wires and we don't want to lift your baby off the cooling mattress.
- You can speak or sing softly – they know your voice and hearing it is comforting.
- You can read a book or play soft relaxing music.
- Don't be afraid to ask your nurse to take a picture of this special time!
- If you are nervous or unsure of how to move your baby or where/how to touch them, just ask a care team member. We are here to help!

Other Options in Polar Bear Care: Hand Hugs

If your baby is not stable enough for a full transfer (such as low blood pressure, recent seizures, or very sick lungs), then our team can offer you “hand hugging” as a part of Polar Bear Care. Hand hugs have the same benefits as holding!

- The nurse will place a chair close to one side of the bed (where there is less equipment)
- They will gently move the baby and equipment attached to them close to that side of the bed.
- The nurse will lower the door/side and help you sit tucked in nice and close to your baby.
- You can lean over your baby, cup their feet, and place your other hand on their abdomen or hold their hand.
- Firm, still pressure is best. When babies are sick, sometimes being caressed and rubbed is overstimulating for them.
- The team will show you safe areas to touch and comfortable ways to touch and hold your baby.



What if my baby doesn't tolerate being held?

- If your baby goes outside of the targeted temperature, has lower oxygen saturation, or another change to their baseline, the team will let you know and will safely transfer your baby back to the bed.
- A change does not mean you can't hold your baby again! The team will discuss a plan with you. Hand hugging remains an option.
- Don't be afraid to ask the team what options are available for you and your baby to bond.

You aren't alone and there are resources and support for you and your family.

Scan below to see how a baby is transferred to be held during cooling:



For more information about HIE, and support for you and your family, visit:



HIE.Support



NewbornBrainSociety.org