

The Least Talked about Subject for Babies but not the Least Important: **How to Dress Babies**

Last October my daughter gave birth to a baby girl and while in the hospital she was instructed by the nurses about how to dress her baby during winter and summer seasons. I, as a new grandparent, found this to be enlightening since I had never heard these recommendations.

Now that we are back into cooler fall weather, the "rule of thumb" for dressing your baby during the fall/winter season is same number of layers that you are wearing plus one. This is due to newborns not being able to regulate their own body temperature. For example, if baby is bundled up in a snowsuit or bunting the 'plus one' layer could be a blanket. Remember to remove some layers upon going indoors at a mall, in warm car, etc. Babies dressed in too many layers (blankets or clothing) are at a greater risk of overheating. According to the National institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) overheating is a risk factor for SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). So, even if your baby is asleep, remove winter outerwear as soon as you come inside. During winter always cover baby's head when going outside. Baby can get cold easily so feel your babies hands and feet occasionally to insure they are not cold. If feet feel cold, put socks on your baby. Onesies are great because they allow you to add layers or remove layers.

The "rule of thumb" for dressing your baby during the summer (or those warmer fall days ahead) is the same number of layers that you are wearing. You need to avoid extra layers on your baby when temperatures rise. This will avoid the risk of prickly heat which is a red rash or in extreme cases, heatstroke. While heatstroke is rare it is important to know the signs and seek medical attention ASAP. Heatstroke signs might be: hot, dry skin; very high fever; diarrhea; agitation; lethargy; convulsions or loss of consciousness. The two main recommendations from national authorities to prevent sunburn are to avoid sun exposure, and to dress infants in lightweight long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and brimmed hats that shade the neck to prevent sunburn. However, when adequate clothing and shade are not available, parents can apply a minimal amount of sunscreen with at least 15 SPF (sun protection factor) to small areas, such as the infant's face and the back of the hands. If an infant gets sunburn, apply cool compresses to the affected area. For a baby younger than six months it is best to keep baby indoors during midday hours when sun is strongest. Select light colors to keep baby cooler when outdoors in the summer.

For bedtime dress your baby in a sleeper or sleep sack but skip blankets because loose bedding is another risk factor for SIDS. Do not let your baby get too hot during sleep. Keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult.

Respectfully submitted by,

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Member of the Washington County Child Protection Citizen Review Panel (and a new grandparent)

For more information on overheating as a risk factor for SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) visit:

National institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)

<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/Pages/sids.aspx>

https://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/Documents/STS_SafeSleepForYourBaby_General_2013.pdf

If you are interested in learning more about the work of the Washington County Child Protection Citizen Review Panel, visit the Washington County

website: <http://www.co.washington.mn.us/index.aspx?NID=1549>

Or, call Don Pelton, Community Services Supervisor, at 651-430-6631.