

Section: Division of Nursing

Index: 7030.027b

PROTOCOL

Page: 1 of 2

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HACKETTSTOWN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

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PACU

(Scope)

TITLE: MANAGING THE HYPOTHERMIC PATIENT IN PACU

PURPOSE: To outline the assessment, intervention, and outcome for the perioperative patient who is hypothermic

SUPPORTIVE DATA: Perioperative hypothermia is associated with post-op complications such as cardiac problems, increased bleeding, and increased post-op infections.

ASSESSMENT: Upon arrival to PACU:

1. Identify risk factors for hypothermia
2. Measure temperature
3. Ask patient if she/he is cold
4. Observe for symptoms of hypothermia (cold extremities, shivering, piloerection)

INTERVENTION If patient is normothermic, continue preventative measures:

1. Keep patient covered (warm blankets, socks, head covering)
2. Room temperature should be minimum 20 - 24° C (68 - 75° F)
3. Ask patient upon admission and every 30 minutes, minimally, if comfortable regarding temperature.
4. Continue to observe for signs or symptoms of hypothermia as in #4 above.

If patient is hypothermic:

1. Apply forced air warming system (Bair Hugger)
 - a. Begin at lower setting with hemodynamically unstable patients, those with circulation problems, unconscious patients, or those who cannot tell you they are too warm.
 - b. Decrease air temperature when normothermia is reached or if vital signs become unstable
2. Keep patient covered.
3. Infuse warm IV fluids if necessary as per anesthesiologist.
4. Humidify and warm gas – oxygen as per anesthesiologist.
5. Monitor temperature each 30 minutes and/or until patient reports, she/he is comfortable

OUTCOME Patient will:

1. Have minimum temperature of 36° C (96.8° F) prior to PACU discharge
2. Describe she/he has an acceptable level of warmth
3. Not exhibit signs or symptoms of hypothermia

DOCUMENTATION: **Record on PACU record:**

1. Any physical findings, including signs and symptoms of hypothermia
2. PACU arrival and discharge temperatures; any temperatures taken during Bair Hugger usage
3. Patient response to any interventions done for hypothermia
4. Documentation of Bair Hugger use in appropriate check-off box

REFERENCE: Journal of PeriAnesthesia Nursing. June 2006. Vol. 21. No. 3. Pg 177-185.