

Safe Bathing Temperatures Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Who checks the water temperature in Acute Care?

In Acute Care, the facilities maintenance department records and monitors water temperature. These records are kept in accordance to facility maintenance standards.

2) Do I need to use a thermometer every time I check the water?

No a thermometer is not required in Acute Care, however a thermometer is required in Continuing Care under the Continuing Care Service Standards. In Acute Care the water temperature can be checked using a sensory check or an approved measuring device if available.

In addition, it would be important to document how the water temperature was checked and if you have an exact temperature from a recording device, document it in the patient health record.

In Acute Care if a sensory check is used, simply document this in the patient health record.

In Continuing Care there is a procedure that outlines how these processes are to be done.

3) What is special about bathing temperatures in Acute Care?

The difference between Acute Care and Continuing Care is in Acute Care a sensory check is permitted. This is permissible because the staffing complements within Acute Care are comprised of RN's, LPN's and HCA's and bathing is part of general nursing practice.

If you have an approved measuring device the identified safe water temperature range for assisted bathing for an adult is between 38 to 43 degrees Celsius. The safe water temperature range for assisted bathing of an infant is 36.7 and 37.2 degrees Celsius.

A sensory check can be done on an adult patient if not contra-indicated by patient's health or other condition by inviting the patient to check the water temperature using their forearm (intact skin only) before entering the tub or shower.

4) Can a non-regulated health care provider assist with patient bathing?

Yes providing that the non-regulated health care provider has the knowledge, skill and competency to provide safe bathing. The Health Care Provider would be supervised by the Health Care Professional as part of their scope of practice.

5) How do you test an infant's bathing water in Acute Care?

When bathing an infant your hands are immersed in the water with the infant while bathing, however for older children or adults your hands are not immersed in the water and there is a risk of placing someone in the water that is too hot. A sensory test is normally used when bathing infants.

The safe water temperature range for assisted bathing of infants is warm to touch of an adult's elbow or the inner aspect of the bare wrist.