



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Clinical Practice: Frequently Asked Question

Q: At what temperature can we set our blanket and fluid warmers?

A: The Emergency Care Research Institute (ECRI) changed the temperature setting recommendations for cabinet blanket warmers in 2009 and reaffirmed that recommendation in 2014. Cabinet blanket warmers can now be set up to 130° F (54°C), or according to manufacturer's recommendations. Fluid warming cabinets should continue to be limited to 110° F (43°C).¹

The change to the recommendation stems from recognition in the healthcare community that blankets and fluids should be warmed separately. The original 2005 recommendations from ECRI for 110° F for both blanket and fluid warmers was based on information that many facilities placed blankets and fluids in the same warmer simultaneously, and often overstocked the warmers. As a result of this dangerous practice, some patients sustained burns from the fluids which hold significantly more heat than blankets and present a greater burn risk. To promote safe practice for all patients, in 2005 ECRI recommended the lower temperature of 110° F for both blankets and fluids.¹

Discussions with healthcare facilities over the past several years indicate a growing awareness and recognition that separate cabinets should be used to warm fluids from those used to warm blankets.

The ECRI recommends separate warming cabinets for blankets and fluids. For facilities using one cabinet with 2 compartments, each compartment must have its own temperature control. If a facility chooses to use the same cabinet/compartment for both blankets and fluids, the temperature must be limited to 110° F (43° C).¹

Perioperative normothermia is critical in promoting the well-being and comfort of all perianesthesia patients. ASPAN updated its Clinical Guideline on Hypothermia, now entitled ASPAN's Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline for the Promotion of Perioperative Normothermia.² The guideline includes new evidence for warming practices and promotion of optimal outcomes for patients.

References:

1. ECRI Institute. ECRI Institute revises its recommendation for temperature limits on blanket warmers (hazard report). *Health Devices*. 2009; 38(7): 230-231.
2. Hooper VD, Chard R, Clifford T, Fetzer S, Fossum S, Godden B, et al. ASPAN's Evidence Based Clinical Practice Guideline for the Promotion of Perioperative Normothermia. *J PeriAnesth Nurs*. 2009;-24(5):-271-287.

This FAQ has been reviewed and updated July 2019