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15 October 2019

Deputy Louise O'Reilly  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ Ref 40949/19**

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

**To ask the Minister for Health if the system of therapeutic hypothermia for newborn babies in the health service takes into account the need for a baby to reach the correct low temperature of 33.5 degrees celsius before cooling can commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

The correct low body temperature is taken into account. There is evidence that induced hypothermia (cooling) of newborn infants who may have suffered from lack of oxygen at birth reduces death or disability, without increasing disability in survivors. The cooling process reduces the amount of damage to brain cells.

The treatment requires the reduction of the infant's core body temperature from 37C to 33-34C (mean 33.5C). The therapeutic process involves the reduction of the infant's temperature to 33.5C and the maintenance at that temperature for 72 hours. On the completion of the 72 hours of body cooling, the infant is gradually rewarmed to normal temperature at a rate 0.5C per hour.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

**Grace Turner**  
General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme