



How to recognise if your child is seriously ill

Information for parents and carers

This information is designed to help you monitor your child's condition if they have a raised temperature or seem unwell so you know when to ask for help and can describe their symptoms. You need to regularly check your child for changing or worsening symptoms, and follow the advice given to you by health professionals.

Most children with a fever get better quickly and without problems, but a very small number of children may develop a serious infection with sepsis (a bloodstream infection) that requires urgent treatment in hospital.

If you are given this leaflet by a health professional they should fill in the section below with specific advice for you and your child.

Child's Name:	Child's Age:
Parent/Carer Name:	
Clinician's Name:	
Date/Time:	
Parental concerns:	
Specific safety advice from clinician:	

Please bring this leaflet with you if you re-attend or use another health service.

Practical things you can do to help your child

- Check your child during the night to see if they are getting better.
- If you are concerned that your child is not improving or has new symptoms such as a new rash, follow the advice inside this leaflet which is colour coded to help you decide what type of advice and help you need.
- If your child is hot to touch, take their temperature with a thermometer.
- Children with fever should not be under, or over, dressed. If your child is hot to touch remove a layer of their clothing.

- Tepid sponging is no longer recommended for the treatment of fever.
- Offer your child regular drinks (where a baby is breastfed, the most appropriate fluid is breast milk).
- If your child is due to have immunisations please consult your GP, practice nurse or health visitor for advice — there may be no need to delay their appointment.
- If you need to keep your child away from nursery or school while they are unwell and have a fever please notify the nursery or school. Your health visitor, community nurse or GP will be able to advise you if you are unsure.
- Keep a diary of your child's symptoms.

Using Medication to Help

- If your child is distressed or very unwell you may use paracetamol to help them feel more comfortable – however it is not always necessary. Please read the instruction on the medication bottle for the dose and frequency. Be aware of the maximum dose that can be given in a 24 hour period.
- You could ask your local community pharmacist for more advice about medication.
- Never give aspirin to a child (unless individually prescribed for them for a long term condition by a hospital consultant).

NHS 111

To contact the NHS 111 service simply dial '111' (it is free from mobiles and landlines).

If you need language support or translation please inform the member of staff you speak to.



**when it's less
urgent than 999**

GREEN (Low Risk: Self Care Advice)

If none of the above factors are present, use the advice on the next page to provide the care your child needs at home. It's sometimes hard to be sure about particular signs and symptoms. If you feel that your child may be seriously ill, or if something that concerns you is not on these lists, contact your GP or 111 for advice.

AMBER Medium Risk: Ask for Advice

Many (but not all) children with these symptoms are seriously unwell and need to be assessed by a health professional promptly. If your child has any of the AMBER symptoms below contact your GP, NHS 111 or walk-in centre promptly.

Temperature

- Raised temperature (more than 37.5°) for 5 days or more
- Shivering or shaking

Breathing

- Nostrils flaring (change size with each breath)
- Breathing faster than normal
- Breathing that's unusually noisy or sounds 'crackly'
- Cough that sounds like a seal barking

AMBER

**Contact
GP Practice,
Walk-in Centre
or call '111'**

Skin, Lips & Tongue

- Unusually pale skin
- Dry mouth, lips and/or tongue
- Rash that fades when pressed firmly (use a clear glass)

Eating & Drinking

- Baby under 1 year who is not feeding (or taking less than half their usual amount of milk)
- Feeding or eating much less than normal
- Has vomited (been sick) more than twice in the last 24 hours
- Under 1 year old with vomiting and/or diarrhoea

Toilet/Nappies

- Under 1 year old with more than 5 watery poos (diarrhoea) in the last 24 hours
- Only one wee or wet nappy in eight hours

Activity & Body

- Less interested than usual in playing or “not quite right”
- Difficult to wake up or unusually sleepy
- Swelling of a limb or joint
- Not using/putting weight on an arm, leg, hand or foot

RED (High Risk: Take Action)

Many (but not all) children with these features are seriously unwell. If your child has any of the RED symptoms below they need to be assessed straight away in an Emergency Department (ED). Dial '999' for an ambulance if necessary.

Temperature

- Temperature over 38°C in babies under 3 months
- Temperature over 39°C in babies aged 3 to 6 months
- Any high temperature in a child who cannot be encouraged to show interest in anything
- Low temperature (below 36°C, check 3 times in a 10 minute period)

Breathing

- Finding it much harder to breathe than normal - looks like they are working hard
- Making 'grunting' noises with every breath (in newborns this may sound like a lamb bleating)
- Very fast breathing (more than 1 breath each second in babies under 1 year)
- Can't say more than a few words at once (for older children who normally talk)
- Breathing that obviously 'pauses'

RED

If you think your child needs an ambulance or urgently needs to be seen, take them to the Emergency Department (ED). Dial '999' if necessary

Skin, Lips & Tongue

- Skin is blue, mottled (purplish, red) or very pale
- Lips or tongue are bluish
- Eyes look 'sunken'
- Hands and feet are unusually cold to touch
- Rash that does not fade when pressed firmly (use a clear glass)

Eating & Drinking

- Baby under 1 month old with no interest in feeding
- Not drinking for more than 8 hours (when awake)
- Extremely thirsty or unable to keep fluids down
- Persistently vomiting for more than 24 hours
- Bloody, black or brown vomit/sick

Toilet/Nappies

- Not had a wee or wet nappy for 12 hours

Activity & Body

- Soft spot on a baby's head is bulging
- Child is floppy
- Not responding to family or carers, or very irritable
- Weak, 'high pitched' or continuous crying in a younger child
- Hard to wake up, won't stay awake or doesn't seem to recognise you
- Stiff neck, especially when trying to look up and down
- Older children who are confused
- The child has a seizure (a fit)

For more information, please watch a short video (link below) presented by Consultant Paediatrician Dr Mat Mathai. It provides guidance on what symptoms to look out for and when to ask for help. Please scan the QR code below to watch the video or go to https://youtu.be/_CE14VfEUGY



For people with hearing and speech difficulties

You can contact us using the Relay UK app. Textphone users will need to dial 18001 ahead of the number to be contacted.

Accessible Information

If you need this information in another format or language, please ask a member of staff.

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Author: Dr Mathew Mathai

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