

Traffic light system for identifying risk of serious illness in under 5s

Refer to the [summary version of table 3 for the NICE guideline on sepsis](#) if a child presents with fever and symptoms or signs that indicate possible sepsis

	Green – low risk	Amber – intermediate risk	Red – high risk
Colour (of skin, lips or tongue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal colour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pallor reported by parent/carer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pale/mottled/ashen/blue
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds normally to social cues Content/smiles Stays awake or awakens quickly Strong normal cry/not crying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not responding normally to social cues No smile Wakes only with prolonged stimulation Decreased activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No response to social cues Appears ill to a healthcare professional Does not wake or if roused does not stay awake Weak, high-pitched or continuous cry
Respiratory		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nasal flaring Tachypnoea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RR >50 breaths/minute, age 6–12 months RR >40 breaths/minute, age >12 months Oxygen saturation ≤95% in air Crackles in the chest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grunting Tachypnoea: RR >60 breaths/minute Moderate or severe chest indrawing
Circulation and hydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal skin and eyes Moist mucous membranes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tachycardia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >160 beats/minute, age <12 months >150 beats/minute, age 12–24 months >140 beats/minute, age 2–5 years CRT ≥3 seconds Dry mucous membranes Poor feeding in infants Reduced urine output 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced skin turgor
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None of the amber or red symptoms or signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age 3–6 months, temperature ≥39°C Fever for ≥5 days Rigors Swelling of a limb or joint Non-weight bearing limb/not using an extremity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age <3 months, temperature ≥38°C* Non-blanching rash Bulging fontanelle Neck stiffness Status epilepticus Focal neurological signs Focal seizures

CRT, capillary refill time; RR, respiratory rate

* Some vaccinations have been found to induce fever in children aged under 3 months

This traffic light table should be used in conjunction with the recommendations in the [NICE guideline on fever in under 5s](#).