

Table 3 Risk stratification tool for children aged under 5 years with suspected sepsis

Category	Age	High risk criteria	Moderate to high risk criteria	Low risk criteria
Behaviour	Any	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	Not responding normally to social cues No smile Wakes only with prolonged stimulation Decreased activity Parent or carer concern that child is behaving differently from usual	Responds normally to social cues Content or smiles Stays awake or awakens quickly Strong normal cry or not crying
Respiratory	Any	Grunting Apnoea Oxygen saturation of less than 90% in air or increased oxygen requirement over baseline	Oxygen saturation of less than 92% in air or increased oxygen requirement over baseline Nasal flaring	No high risk or moderate to high risk criteria met
	Under 1 year	Raised respiratory rate: 60 breaths per minute or more	Raised respiratory rate: 50–59 breaths per minute	
	1–2 years	Raised respiratory rate: 50 breaths per minute or more	Raised respiratory rate: 40–49 breaths per minute	
	3–4 years	Raised respiratory rate: 40 breaths per minute or more	Raised respiratory rate: 35–39 breaths per minute	
Circulation and hydration	Any	Bradycardia: heart rate less than 60 beats per minute	Capillary refill time of 3 seconds or more Reduced urine output For catheterised patients, passed less than 1 ml/kg of urine per hour	No high risk or moderate to high risk criteria met
	Under 1 year	Rapid heart rate: 160 beats per minute or more	Rapid heart rate: 150–159 beats per minute	
	1–2 years	Rapid heart rate: 150 beats per minute or more	Rapid heart rate: 140–149 beats per minute	

	3–4 years	Rapid heart rate: 140 beats per minute or more	Rapid heart rate: 130–139 beats per minute	
Skin	Any	Mottled or ashen appearance Cyanosis of skin, lips or tongue Non-blanching rash of skin	Pallor of skin, lips or tongue	Normal colour
Temperature	Any	Less than 36°C		
	Under 3 months	38°C or more		
	3–6 months		39°C or more	
Other	Any		Leg pain Cold hands or feet	No high risk or high to moderate risk criteria met

This table is adapted from NICE's guideline on [fever in under 5s](#).

Sepsis risk stratification tool: children aged under 5 years out of hospital

High risk criteria

- Behaviour:
 - 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
- Heart rate:
 - aged under 1 year: 160 beats per minute or more
 - aged 1–2 years: 150 beats per minute or more
 - aged 3–4 years: 140 beats per minute or more
 - heart rate less than 60 beats per minute at any age
- Respiratory rate:
 - aged under 1 year: 60 breaths per minute or more
 - aged 1–2 years: 50 breaths per minute or more
 - aged 3–4 years: 40 breaths per minute or more
 - grunting
 - apnoea
 - oxygen saturation of less than 90% in air or increased oxygen requirement over baseline
- Mottled or ashen appearance
- Cyanosis of skin, lips or tongue
- Non-blanching rash of skin
- Temperature:
 - aged under 3 months: 38°C or more
 - any age: less than 36°C

Moderate to high risk criteria

- Behaviour:
 - not responding normally to social cues
 - no smile
 - wakes only with prolonged stimulation
 - decreased activity
 - parent or carer concern that child is behaving differently from usual
- Heart rate:
 - aged under 1 year: 150–159 beats per minute
 - aged 1–2 years: 140–149 beats per minute
 - aged 3–4 years: 130–139 beats per minute
- Respiratory rate:
 - aged under 1 year: 50–59 breaths per minute
 - aged 1–2 years: 40–49 breaths per minute
 - aged 3–4 years: 35–39 breaths per minute
 - oxygen saturation less than 92% in air or increased oxygen requirement over baseline
 - nasal flaring
- Capillary refill time of 3 seconds or more
- Reduced urine output, or for catheterised patients passed less than 1 ml/kg of urine per hour
- Pallor of skin, lips or tongue
- Temperature:
 - aged 3–6 months: 39°C or more
- Leg pain
- Cold hands or feet

Low risk criteria

- Responds normally to social cues
- Content or smiles
- Stays awake or awakens quickly
- Strong normal cry or not crying
- No high risk or moderate to high risk criteria met
- Normal colour

