

Rapid appraisal of all waiting children

This should be implemented in every clinic, even if IMCI has not started yet it is easy to teach health workers to recognise the signs of serious illness in children.

CHECKING FOR GENERAL DANGER SIGNS

ASK THE CARER:

Is the child able to drink or breastfeed?

This sign is present if a child is not able to suck or swallow when offered a drink or breastmilk. If the carer says that the child is not able to drink, offer the child some water or breastmilk. If the child is not able to swallow the fluid the general danger sign is present.

Is the child vomiting everything?

This sign is present if *every* time the child takes anything orally this is vomited up again. It is common for children to vomit several times but if there are times when food or fluids do stay down this sign is not present. If the mother says that the child is vomiting everything, offer the child some water or breastmilk to drink, if the child vomits you can confirm that the general danger sign is present.

Has the child has convulsions with this illness?

When a child has a convulsion he loses consciousness and there are jerking movements of the arms and legs, and the breathing may be irregular. Ask the mother about convulsions using words that the mother understands. A child who has had a convulsion with this illness may have meningitis and needs further investigation at the hospital.

LOOK AT THE CHILD:

Is the child lethargic or unconscious?

A lethargic child is not awake and alert as he should be. He is drowsy and does not show interest in what is going on around him. The lethargic child will not watch you or the mother while you are talking. If you are not sure ask the mother if she thinks the child is unusually sleepy. An unconscious child cannot be wakened.

ALL CHILDREN WITH A GENERAL DANGER SIGN MUST BE ASSESSED AND TREATED IMMEDIATELY THEN REFERRED TO HOSPITAL.