

4 **Prevent illness:** Recurrent illness is a major cause of malnutrition. There are six important things to remember which could prevent illness:

- (a) **Handwashing:** before feeding the child, before preparing the child's food, and after cleaning up the child who has passed stools. This is the single most useful measure to prevent recurrent diarrhoea.
- (b) **Drinking water to be boiled.** Though useful for everyone, it is of particular importance to the malnourished child with recurrent diarrhoea.
- (c) **Full immunisation of the child:** Tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis and measles are all prevented by immunisation and are the diseases that cause severe malnutrition. In malnourished children, these diseases are more common and life threatening, than in normal children.
- (d) **Vitamin A:** To be given along with measles vaccine in the ninth month and then repeated once every six months till five years of age. This too reduces infections and night blindness, all of which is more common in malnourished children.
- (e) **Avoid persons with infections,** especially with a cough and cold picking up the child, and handling the child, or even coming near the child during the illness. This does not apply to mother, but even she should be more rigorous in handwashing and more careful in handling the baby.
- (f) **Preventing Malaria:** In districts with malaria the baby should sleep under an insecticide treated bed net. Malaria too is a major cause of malnutrition.



You should encourage parents and other family members to spend time with the child as it matters a lot. Time has to be spent in feeding the child. Time has to be spent in playing and talking with the child. Such children eat and absorb food better.

5 Access to health services

- ◆ Access to health services makes for prompt treatment of illness. On the very first day of the illness, if you help the mother decide on whether it is a minor illness for which home remedy would be adequate, or to be referred to a doctor, such a decision would save lives. Early treatment would prevent malnutrition.
- ◆ Access to contraceptive services is important. If the age of mother is less than 19, or the gap between two children is less than three years, there is a much higher chance of the children being malnourished.



6 Access to anganwadi services

- ◆ The anganwadi provides a food supplement for the child up to the age of 5. This could be a cooked meal, or in the form of take – home rations. Malnourished children are to be given additional food supplements. For children below the age of two, take – home rations