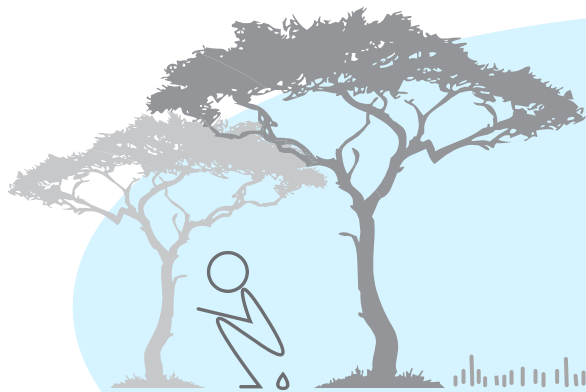


# Healthy Start

## Maternal anaemia and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)



WASH-related infections contribute to anaemia:



Frequent **diarrhoea** prevents the body from absorbing nutrients.



**Parasitic worms** transmitted through contaminated soil and water, such as hookworm, can cause blood loss and undernutrition.



Frequent faecal-oral transmission of pathogens is thought to lead to **environmental enteropathy**, which permanently damages the intestine.

Anaemia contributes to 20% of all maternal deaths. Iron-deficiency anaemia can be caused by blood loss associated with hookworm and other infections contracted through poor WASH.

## Anaemia and undernutrition harm mothers and babies

**Maternal anaemia** increases risks and poor outcomes during pregnancy and childbirth.



Moderate to severe anaemia increases the risk of **preterm delivery**. Severe anaemia is a cause of **maternal mortality**.



Maternal undernutrition leads to **low birthweight** — a risk factor for newborn morbidity and mortality — and compromises the nutritional benefits of **breastfeeding**.



Adequate sanitation, access to safe water and good hygiene practices help prevent undernutrition.

## Preventing WASH-related causes of undernutrition requires action:



WASH integrated into **national nutrition and maternal health strategies and plans**.



**Increased domestic and international funding for WASH** as a key 'nutrition-sensitive' intervention.



**Joint multi-sector action** by national governments, the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, health-care providers, WASH practitioners, academics and research institutions, donors and civil society.



**Leadership** from the nutrition and health sectors combined with strong political will and commitment to WASH.



**Strengthened accountability** of governments and development partners for nutrition-sensitive commitments, including WASH.

[www.wateraid.org/healthystart](http://www.wateraid.org/healthystart)

