

Bronchiolitis Advice Sheet for Babies/Children under 2 years



What is Bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is an infectious disease when the tiniest airways in your baby/child's lungs become swollen. This can make it more difficult for your baby/child to breathe. Usually, bronchiolitis is caused by a virus. It is common in winter months and usually only cause's mild cold like symptoms. Most babies/children get better on their own.

Some babies/children, especially very young ones, can have difficulty with breathing or feeding and may need to go to hospital.

- Blue lips
- Unresponsive, or wakes only with prolonged stimulation
- Very irritable
- Finding it difficult to breathe or looks tired
- Unusually long pauses in breathing (more than 10 seconds)
- No wet nappies for 18 hours

You need emergency help. Please phone 999 or go straight to the nearest A&E department.

- Decreased feeding
- Passing less urine than normal
- Baby / Child's health gets worse or you are worried
- If you baby / child is vomiting

Please phone your GP practice or 111 to arrange a same day assessment (Telephone / video review or clinic appointment)

- If you have concerns about your baby / child

Please contact 111 or health visitor

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What are the symptoms?

- Your baby/child may have a runny nose, cough and sometimes a fever.
- After a few days your baby/child's cough may become worse.
- Your baby/child's breathing may be faster or harder than normal and it may become noisy. He or she may need to make more effort to breathe.
- Sometimes, in the very young babies, bronchiolitis may cause them to have brief pauses in their breathing (but pauses longer than 10 seconds are a worrying feature)
- As breathing becomes more difficult, your baby may not be able to take the usual amount of milk by breast or bottle.
- You may notice fewer wet nappies than usual.
- Your baby/child may vomit after feeding and become irritable.

How can I help my baby?

- If your baby/child is not feeding as normal offer feeds little and often.
- If your baby/child has a fever, you can give him or her paracetamol in the recommended doses. If your child is older than 3 months old you may also give Ibuprofen.
- If your baby/child is already taking medicines or inhalers, you should carry on using these. If you find it difficult to get your baby/child to take them, ask your doctor for advice.
- Bronchiolitis is caused by a virus so antibiotics won't help.
- Make sure your baby/child is not exposed to tobacco smoke. Passive smoking can seriously damage your baby/child's health. It makes breathing problems like bronchiolitis worse. Remember smoke remains on your clothes even if you smoke outside.

How long does bronchiolitis last?

- Most babies/children with bronchiolitis symptoms last for a few days so your child should be back to normal within about two weeks but sometimes the cough may last longer.
- If the cough lasts longer than 4 weeks contact your GP practice, Health visitor or 111
- Babies and young children can have over 8 colds a year mainly in autumn / winter
- Your baby/child can go back to nursery or day care as soon as he or she is well enough (that is feeding normally and with no difficulty in breathing).
- There is usually no need to see your doctor if your baby/child is recovering well. If you are worried about your baby/child's progress, discuss this with your doctor, health visitor or community nurse.