

BRONCHIOLITIS ADVICE SHEET FOR CARERS CHILDREN AGED UNDER TWO YEARS

What is bronchiolitis?

An illness where the smallest air passages in the lungs get inflamed. It is caused by a virus and is most common in the winter months. It usually causes a 'cold' but in some children it can cause difficulty breathing and feeding.

How long does it last?

Most children get better within about 2 weeks, although a cough may linger for several weeks more. Your child can go back to nursery/day care as soon as you feel they are well enough.

What are the symptoms?

- Runny nose, cough and temperature
- The cough often gets worse over the first few days
- Your child's breathing may become faster than usual and may become noisy
- Your child may be making extra effort to breathe
- Very young babies sometimes have pauses in their breathing lasting a few seconds
- Your child may struggle to feed and may have fewer wet nappies than usual
- Your child may vomit after feeding.

How can I help my child?

- **Feeding** – Offer your child smaller but more frequent feeds and/or their usual drinks to make it easier for them and keep them hydrated. You should continue breast feeding.
- **Breathing** – Your child may find it easier to breathe if the air in the room is not too dry, the room is not too hot and if they aren't lying completely flat
- **Smoking** – Make sure your child is not exposed to tobacco smoke, which makes breathing problems worse. Smoke lingers in clothes even if you smoke outside.
- **Fever** – You can give paracetamol in the recommended dose for fever or discomfort.
- **Medicines** – Antibiotics don't help in bronchiolitis as it is caused by virus. If your child is already taking medicines or inhalers then carry on giving these. Simple medicines such as vaporubs, karvol and saline nasal drops may help your child feel more comfortable – you can talk to your pharmacist for advice about these.

See the back of this leaflet for ways you can get extra help and advice if you are worried

Can I prevent bronchiolitis?

No. The viruses that cause bronchiolitis also cause coughs and 'colds' in older children and adults, so they are very hard to prevent.

Where can I get more help and advice if I need it?

Green	<p>If your child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is snuffly or noisy but is not having any difficulty breathing • Is managing most of their usual feeds 	→	<p>For advice: Contact NHS Direct 0845 86 87 www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk Speak to your health visitor or pharmacist</p>
Amber	<p>If your child has any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeding much less than usual • Having less wet nappies than usual • Vomiting more than usual • A temperature above 39°C • A problem with their heart or lungs, a disability or was born prematurely • Seems to be worse or you are worried 	→	<p>You need to see a nurse or doctor</p> <p>Ring your GP surgery or go to your local walk-in- centre</p>
Red	<p>If your child has any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue lips • Struggling to breathe • Pauses in breathing or an irregular pattern of breathing • Unresponsive to you 	→	<p>You need urgent help</p> <p>Go to your nearest A&E straight away or call 999</p>

What will happen if I need to take my child to hospital?

- A doctor and/or nurse will examine your child, measure their breathing and ask about their breathing and feeding
- If your child needs oxygen to help with their feeding they will need to stay in hospital
- If your child doesn't need extra help they may be watched for a short time to make sure they are ok, or may be allowed to go home
- If your child needs oxygen it will be given through a mask or small prongs in the nose
- If your child needs help with feeding they may get milk through a fine tube in their nose, or they may need fluid through a drip
- Your child may be given a nebuliser – a steam medicine given through a mask
- Your child may have a small amount of mucus taken from their nose to test for viruses and some children may need blood tests and x-rays
- One person can stay in hospital with your child but you will be asked to wash your hands carefully when caring for your child

A small number of children need extra help with their breathing and some may need to go to intensive care. If your child stays in hospital they will be watched very carefully to make sure this isn't needed.

This information is available in alternative formats. For more information, please ask staff or ask to speak to the Pals office.