

# Health advice for parents and carers



The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been a worrying time for all of us and may have made it harder for parents and families to know when and how to use local health services safely.

This booklet explains where and when to seek advice and help if you are concerned about your child's physical or mental health. It aims to help make sure your child receives any care and support they need at the right time and in the right place.

In the autumn, we usually see an increase in respiratory, or breathing, infections in children. These infections are very common in children and most of the time your child can be looked after safely at home, with support from your local pharmacist, without seeing a doctor. Inside this booklet, you will find a handy guide from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health which explains symptoms to look out for in children and where and when to seek help for your child if they are unwell.

This year from late summer, you may hear more about a viral infection called bronchiolitis or RSV. This is a very common viral infection in children that circulates most years. Most cases of bronchiolitis are not serious, and we have included information on symptoms and treatment, and when to seek help from a healthcare professional.

We have recently seen an increase in the numbers of children and young people seeking help from the NHS for their mental health during the pandemic. On pages six and eight you can find information on local mental health support and advice services for children, young people and their families – including where to get urgent help.

# Advice for parents/carers during coronavirus

It can be confusing to know what to do when your child is unwell during the coronavirus pandemic. Remember that the NHS is still providing safe care.

GP practices and hospitals have made changes to help reduce the risk of infection. Only one parent/carer will be able to attend A&E with their child. Please use the hand sanitisers provided, wear a face covering in enclosed spaces and maintain social distancing. **Remember: if your child is unwell, seek advice and medical attention.**

Here is some advice to help:



**RED**

## If your child has any of the following signs:

- Pale, mottled (blotchy) skin that feels unusually cold.
- Severe breathing difficulty – long pauses in their breathing, irregular breathing, starts going blue, or is too breathless to talk / eat / drink.
- A fit / seizure (unless these are expected).
- Becomes extremely distressed (crying for a very long time despite distraction), is confused, sleepy all the time and difficult to wake up or not responding even when awake.
- Has a rash that does not disappear when a glass is lightly pressed against the skin.
- Under 3 months of age with a temperature of 38°C / 100.4°F or above (unless fever in the 48 hours following vaccinations and no other RED or AMBER features).
- Pain in the testicles, especially in teenage boys.
- The child has seriously harmed themselves and needs medical help.
- **If you are frightened because your child looks very unwell.**

## You need urgent help:

Go to the nearest A&E department or call 999



**AMBER**

## If your child has any of the following signs:

- Finding it hard to breathe, including: drawing in of the muscles below their lower ribs, at their neck or between their ribs.
- Seems dehydrated (sunken eyes, drowsy or no wee passed for 12 hours).
- Becomes excessively sleepy or irritable (unable to settle with toys, TV, food or comfort) - especially despite their temperature coming down.
- Extreme shivering or muscle pain without an obvious explanation.
- Babies of 3 to 6 months of age with a temperature of 39°C / 102.2°F or above.
- Babies and children with a fever of 38°C or above for more than 5 days
- Constantly being sick.
- Constant or worsening tummy pain.
- Blood in the poo or wee.
- Increasingly thirsty and weeing more.
- Any injury of arms or legs causing reduced movement or persistent pain.
- Head injury causing constant crying or drowsiness.
- **Is getting worse or if you are worried.**

**Immediately contact your GP and make an appointment for your child to be seen that day or call NHS 111 - dial 111.**

During the coronavirus pandemic, at peak times, access to a healthcare professional may be delayed. If symptoms continue for 4 hours or more and you have not been able to speak to either a member of staff from your GP practice or to NHS 111, then consider taking them to your nearest A&E.



**GREEN**

## Your child has none of the RED or AMBER signs above, care for them at home but watch for any new signs developing:

- If your child has any symptoms that might be COVID-19 (high temperature, new continuous cough or loss of taste/smell) arrange for them to be tested via the NHS testing website or by calling 119.
- You, and anyone in your support bubble, must remain at home until your child's test results are back.
- If your child has been burned, visit <https://safetea.org.uk/first-aid/> for first aid advice and for information about when to seek medical attention.

## Continue providing your child's care at home.

If you are still concerned about your child, contact NHS 111 - visit [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk) or dial 111.



**MENTAL HEALTH**

- If you are worried and your child is known to child or adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), please contact them.
- If your child needs urgent mental health support or advice, visit <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health> for local services and 24/7 urgent helplines, or text SHOUT to 85258
- If you notice any self-harm injuries on your child, please contact the NHS 24/7 Mental Health online support (visit [www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/](https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/)) or your GP.
- If you are worried about an eating problem/disorder, contact BEAT (visit <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/support-services>) or your GP.
- Helpful advice is also available at Every Mind Matters (<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters>) and MindEd for Families (<https://www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk/>).

# Bronchiolitis in babies and young children



**Bronchiolitis is a common lower respiratory tract infection that affects babies and young children under 2 years old. Most cases are mild and clear up within 2 to 3 weeks without the need for treatment, but some children have more severe symptoms and need hospital treatment.**

**Bronchiolitis is caused by a virus known as the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), which is spread through tiny droplets of liquid from the coughs or sneezes of someone who's infected.**



## Symptoms of bronchiolitis

The early symptoms of bronchiolitis are similar to those of a common cold, such as a runny nose and a cough. Further symptoms then usually develop over the next few days, including:

- a slight high temperature (fever)
- a dry and persistent cough
- difficulty feeding
- rapid or noisy breathing (wheezing).



## Treating bronchiolitis

There's no medication to kill the virus that causes bronchiolitis, but the infection usually clears up within 2 weeks without the need for treatment.

Most children can be cared for at home in the same way that you'd treat a cold.

Make sure your child gets enough fluid to avoid dehydration. You can give infants paracetamol or ibuprofen to bring down their temperature if the fever is upsetting them. Always check the label.



## When to get medical help

Most cases of bronchiolitis are not serious, but see your GP or call NHS 111 if:

- you're worried about your child
- your child has taken less than half their usual amount during the last 2 or 3 feeds, or they have had a dry nappy for 12 hours or more
- your child has a persistent high temperature of 38C or above
- your child seems very tired or irritable.



## Dial 999 for an ambulance if:

- your baby is having difficulty breathing
- your baby's tongue or lips are blue
- there are long pauses in your baby's breathing.



## Preventing bronchiolitis

It's very difficult to prevent bronchiolitis, but there are steps you can take to reduce your child's risk of catching it and help prevent the virus spreading.

You should:

- wash your hands and your child's hands frequently
- wash or wipe toys and surfaces regularly
- keep infected children at home until their symptoms have improved
- keep newborn babies away from people with colds or flu
- avoid smoking around your child, and do not let others smoke around them.

# Mental health support for children, young people and their families

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impact our everyday lives, it remains a challenging time for many children and young people. While children and young people have been at far less risk from coronavirus than older adults, we have seen an increase in the numbers of children and young people seeking help from the NHS for their mental health.

We are working with our local authority partners and other NHS organisations to ensure children, young people and their families in north central London – Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington – get the advice and support they need during these uncertain times.

## Where to get urgent help

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### **24/7 mental health crisis support line**

If you are a child or young person aged under 18 in crisis and living in Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey or Islington, or if you are the parent or carer of a child or young person in crisis, you can call the mental health crisis support line available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **0800 151 0023**.

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### **Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (or CAMHS)**

If your child is currently being supported by mental health services for children and young people (CAMHS), you can contact your care coordinator or the duty number for the team during office hours. Out of hours and on weekends, please contact the mental health crisis support line on **0800 151 0023**.

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### **Accident and Emergency Department (A&E)**

If a child or young person needs emergency medical help, is seriously ill or their life is at risk, then call **999** or take them to the nearest Accident & Emergency (A&E).

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### **NHS 111**

If you are not sure what to do, you can check **NHS 111 online** or call **111** for advice.

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# Mental health support for children, young people and their families

## Other support including websites for children and young people

If a child or young person would like further information or advice on their mental health or difficulties they are experiencing, they could try one of the following websites or organisations:

**Kooth** – provides free, safe, anonymous online emotional and mental health support for young people aged 11-25 years across London.

As an online service, it is available seven days per week, 365 days a year for 24 hours. The Kooth team is available every day from noon until 10pm weekdays and from 6pm until 10pm on Saturday and Sundays (reduced cover during holidays).

 [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

**Shout 85258** – provides free, confidential, 24/7 text message support in the UK for anyone who is struggling to cope. They can help with issues including suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety, panic attacks, abuse, self-harm, relationship problems and bullying. Text 'Shout' to 85258 to speak to a trained volunteer who will listen and work with you to solve problems.

 [www.giveusashout.org](http://www.giveusashout.org)

**Papyrus** – provides confidential support and advice to young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person:

- call **0800 068 41 41** for free – every day, 9am to 12am (midnight)
- you can also text **07860 039967** (charges may apply)
- you can email [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

 [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

**Childline** – provides a confidential helpline for any child with a problem. It comforts, advises and protects. You can:

- call **0800 1111** for free, from 9am to 3.30am
- have an online chat with a counsellor, 9am to 10.30pm
- check out the message boards.

 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**The Mix** – provides a free confidential helpline and online service that aims to find young people the best help, whatever the problem. You can:

- call **0808 808 4994** for free – every day, 3pm to 12am (midnight)
- access the discussion boards
- email **The Mix**

 [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

**Every Mind Matters** – includes advice for young people on how to look after their mental health and wellbeing and deal with the issues that matter to them.

 [www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/youth-mental-health](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/youth-mental-health)