

Advice for parents and carers: Bronchiolitis and RSV



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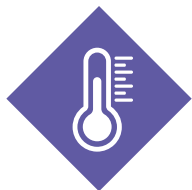
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Bronchiolitis in babies and young children



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.

When should you worry?



RED

If your child has any of the following:

- Is pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to touch
- Has pauses in their breathing lasting more than 10 seconds, makes a **grunting** noise every time they breathe out or has blue lips
- Is stiff or rigid or makes repeated, jerky movements of arms or legs that doesn't stop when you hold them (a fit or seizure)
- Is extremely agitated (crying inconsolably despite distraction), confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
- Has a rash that does not disappear with pressure (the '**Glass Test**')
- Is 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)

You need urgent help.

Go to the nearest **Hospital Emergency (A&E) Department** or phone 999



AMBER

If your child has any of the following:

- Difficulty breathing, including breathing fast all of the time; widening their nostrils or **pulling in of the muscles below the ribs** when breathing
- Not interested in feeding and/or looks dehydrated (dry mouth, sunken eyes, no tears, drowsy, no wet nappies in the last 8 hours or sunken fontanelle (soft spot on the head))
- Is drowsy (excessively sleepy) or irritable (unable to settle them with toys, TV, food or picking up) – especially if they remain drowsy or irritable despite their fever coming down
- Is 3-6 months of age with a temperature of 39°C / 102.2°F or above (but fever is common in babies up to 2 days after they receive vaccinations) or continues to have a fever of 38.0°C or above for more than 5 days
- Is getting worse or if you are worried

You need to contact a doctor or nurse today.

Please ring your GP surgery or call NHS 111 - dial 111

If symptoms persist 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 staff, recheck that your child has not developed any red features.



GREEN

- None of the above features are present
- It is normal for a baby to take slight pauses in their breathing for a few seconds, or to breath rapidly for a short period. By 6 weeks of age they should have a more regular breathing pattern.
- Additional information is available about infant crying and how to cope – click [here](#)

Self care

Continue providing your child's care at home. If you are still concerned about your baby, speak to your **health visitor, local pharmacist** or call NHS 111– dial 111

For parents from ethnic minority groups, you can contact the **Barnado's Boloh advisors** who can provide practical advice and support in many different languages. Call 0800 151 2605 or click [here](#) for the web chat function.