

Bronchiolitis

Advice for parents and carers of children aged 2 years old and under.



What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is when the smallest air passages in a child's lungs become swollen. This can make it more difficult for your child to breathe.

Bronchiolitis commonly affects babies and younger children, it is usually caused by a virus called respiratory syncytial virus (known as RSV).

Almost all children will have had an infection caused by RSV by the time they are two years old. It is most common in the winter months and usually only causes mild "cold-like" symptoms. Most children get better on their own.

Some children however, especially very young ones, can have more severe symptoms including difficulty with breathing or feeding and may need treatment in hospital.

Most children with bronchiolitis get better within about two weeks. The cough may go on for a few more weeks.

What are the symptoms?

Temperature and cough

- Your child may have a runny nose and sometimes have a temperature and a cough.
- After a few days your child's cough may become worse.

Breathing difficulties

- Your child's breathing may be faster than normal and it may become noisy. He or she may need to make more effort to breathe.
- Sometimes, in very young children, bronchiolitis may cause them to have brief pauses in their breathing.

Feeding and other symptoms

- Sometimes if your child's breathing becomes more difficult they may not be able to take their usual amount of milk by breast or bottle or may want to feed more frequently but take a smaller amount.
- You may notice fewer wet nappies than usual.
- Your child may vomit after feeding and become irritable.

Other important factors to consider

There are other factors or pre-existing medical conditions that may affect your child's ability to cope with bronchiolitis.

These are if your child:

- Was a premature baby, or
- is less than 6 weeks old, or
- if they have a lung problem, or
- if they have a heart problem, or
- if your child has a problem with their immune system.

We recommend that in these circumstances you contact your Practice Nurse or Doctor to discuss the situation further.

How long does bronchiolitis last?

Most children with bronchiolitis will seem to worsen during the first 1-3 days of the illness before beginning to improve over the next two weeks.

The cough may go on for a few weeks or more; this is usually longer than most common coughs and colds.

Your child can go back to nursery or day care as soon as he or she is well enough (feeding normally and with no difficulty in breathing).

There is usually no need to see your doctor if your child is recovering well. If you are worried about your child's progress, discuss this with your Health Visitor, Practice Nurse or Doctor.

How can I help my child? (Self-care)

- If your child is not feeding as normal, offer smaller feeds more frequently.
- If your child is in pain or distressed you can give them liquid paracetamol or ibuprofen, but always follow the instructions on the medical container or ask your pharmacist. Please note ibuprofen is not recommended for children diagnosed with asthma.
- Never exceed the maximum dose for paracetamol or ibuprofen in any 24 hour period. We advise keeping a diary of when you give each dose of medicine so that you do not give your child too much of either medicine.
- Do not give aspirin to a child under 16.
- If your child is already taking medicines or inhalers, you should carry on using these. If you find it difficult to get your child to take them, ask your Pharmacist, Health Visitor or Doctor for advice.
- Bronchiolitis is caused by a virus so antibiotics will not help.

If you are worried about your child, trust your instincts. Contact your GP or dial NHS 111.

Make sure your child is never exposed to tobacco smoke. Passive smoking can seriously damage children's health. It can make breathing problems like bronchiolitis worse.



Remember, smoke remains on your clothes when you smoke anywhere, including outside.

Where to get help if you would like help to stop smoking:

Buckinghamshire

Smokefree - Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Tel: 0845 2707222

Text: 07824 625311

www.smokescape.org

Berkshire

SmokefreelifeBerkshire

Tel: 0800 6226360 or **text** QUIT to 66777

www.smokefreelifeberkshire.com

What do I do if my child has bronchiolitis?

Most children with bronchiolitis get better over time, but some children can get worse.

You need to check your child regularly and follow the advice below.



RED

If your child...

- has blue lips, or
- is unresponsive or very irritable, or
- is struggling to breathe, or
- has unusually long pauses in breathing, or
- has an irregular breathing pattern.



You need emergency help

Call 999 or go straight to the nearest hospital Emergency (A&E) Department.

Your nearest hospitals (open 24 hours, 7 days a week):

- Frimley Park, Surrey
- Hillingdon Hospital
- John Radcliffe, Oxford
- Milton Keynes Hospital
- Royal Berkshire, Reading
- Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Aylesbury
- Wexham Park Hospital, Slough.



AMBER

If your child...

- is feeding less by 50% (half), or
- is passing less urine than normal, or
- is vomiting, or
- has a high temperature, or
- is finding it difficult to breathe, or
- if your child's health gets worse, or
- if you are worried.



You need to contact a nurse or doctor today

Please telephone your GP surgery or, if it is closed, call **NHS 111**.



GREEN

If your child...

Has none of the symptoms listed in the red and amber boxes above.



Self-care

You can care for your child at home using the advice on this leaflet.

If you feel you need more advice, please contact your Health Visitor, GP Surgery or your local pharmacy.

Find links to these at www.nhs.uk

You can also call **NHS 111** for advice.

Some useful information

If you need advice please try:

Your local pharmacy can be found at www.nhs.uk

Health Visitor:.....

Your GP Surgery:.....

Please contact your GP when the surgery is open or call **NHS 111** when the GP surgery is closed. **NHS 111** provides advice for urgent care needs. It is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls from landlines and mobile phones are free.

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk for online advice and information

Buckinghamshire - Family Information Service

Email: familyinfo@buckscc.gov.uk

Tel: 01296 383065 **Text:** 07786 202920

Web: www.bucksfamilyinfo.org

Berkshire - Slough Family Information Service

Tel: 01753 476 589 **Web:** www.serviceguide.slough.gov.uk

Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead

Tel: 01628 683 800 **Web:** www.rbwm.gov.uk

The Children and Young People Urgent Care Advisory Group is made up of child health specialists from across the NHS and partner agencies such as the Local Authority and is led by Aylesbury Vale and Chiltern NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups. We are a cross-organisational and multi-specialist group working to improve child health.

This leaflet has been produced after careful consideration of the evidence available including but not exclusively from NICE, SIGN, EBM data and the NHS.



Last revised December 2017. Next review date December 2019.