

RESPIRATORY: Bronchiolitis


Patient Information Sheet

Bronchiolitis Advice Sheet – Babies/Children under 2 years



What is Bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is an infectious disease when the small airways in your baby/child's lungs become swollen. This can make it more difficult for your baby/child to breathe. Bronchiolitis is usually caused by a virus. It is common in winter months and usually only causes mild, cough, 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. Remember Bronchiolitis is infectious and is easily spread from a coughing baby/infant.

What are the symptoms?

- Your baby/child may have a runny nose and sometimes a temperature and a cough. After a few days your baby/child's cough may become worse.
- Your baby/child's breathing may be faster than normal and it may become noisy. He or she may need to use more effort to breathe.
- Sometimes, in the very young babies, Bronchiolitis may cause them to have brief pauses in their breathing. If this happens you need to seek medical attention today (see amber box ).
- If 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 – your baby needs at least 150ml/kg of milk every 24 hours to stay hydrated. Give this in 2 or 3 hourly feeds.*
- Sit your baby up after feeds
- Main treatments are to make sure that your baby is managing to take enough feed to keep hydrated and is able to breathe without using lots of effort – if either of these things become a problem you need to seek medical advice .
- 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 you may give Ibuprofen as an alternative. Speak to your Pharmacist for advice and guidance.
- If your baby/child is already taking medicines or inhalers for other reasons, you should carry on using these.
- Bronchiolitis is caused by a virus so antibiotics won't help.
- Inhalers and steroids don't help in  Bronchiolitis
- Make sure your baby/child is not exposed to tobacco smoke. Passive smoking can seriously damage your baby/child's health.
- Remember smoke is an irritant and will make your babies symptoms worse - smoke remains on your clothes even if you smoke outside.

How long does Bronchiolitis last?

- Most babies/children with bronchiolitis get better within about two weeks – the cough may persist a little longer.
- 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. But if you are worried about your baby/child's progress, contact NHS 111 or discuss this with your doctor.