



Information for Patients and Carers

Bronchiolitis

What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is a viral infection most often affecting babies and children under 2 years old. The virus causes their airways to become swollen and full of mucus, making it difficult for them to breathe and drink milk or eat. Most children will get better by resting at home.

Common symptoms of bronchiolitis

Your child might have:

- Sneezing, a runny or blocked nose and a fever (like having a cold)
- A cough
- Fast or noisy breathing
- Drinking and eating less than usual
- Being irritable

Symptoms are often worse after 3 to 5 days and also at night. The cough can last for a few weeks.

How can I look after my child at home?

You can help by:

- Keeping your child upright when awake to help them breathe more easily
- Saline nose drops can help unblock their nose (available from your local pharmacy)
- Giving smaller, more frequent drinks if they are struggling to feed
- Giving children's paracetamol or ibuprofen for fever (follow the instructions on the packet)
- Checking on them often during the day and night

Preventing bronchiolitis

Bronchiolitis is usually caused by a virus called RSV. This is a common cold virus and spreads easily between children and in families. Pregnant mums can get the RSV vaccine from 28 weeks of pregnancy. This helps protect babies from getting very poorly with bronchiolitis during their first 6 months of life.



**Watch this video
to learn more**

Keep your child away from cigarette smoke and vapes because passive smoking can cause serious damage your child's health and make their breathing worse. Remember smoke remains on your clothes even if you smoke outside. If you need help giving up smoking call the free Smokefree National Helpline on 0300 123 1044

When should I be worried and what should I do?

Watch these videos to understand some of the signs that your child is struggling to breathe, including:



Recessions:

Their tummy or neck pulling in when they breathe



Grunting:

Making noises when they breathe out



RED

You need urgent help.

- Blue lips
- Irregular or severe difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises, their neck or tummy sucking in under their ribs (recessions) or they may be breathing quickly.
- Pauses in their breathing
- Your child becomes agitated, floppy or difficult to wake
- Is under 3 months old and has a temperature of 38°C or higher (a fever)

Please attend your local Emergency Department or call 999



AMBER

- Your child is working hard to breathe – you may see drawing in of rib and neck muscles
- Has signs of dehydration like a dry mouth, sunken eyes or sunken fontanelle (soft spot on their head), or not passed urine for more than 8 hours
- Feeding less than normal
- Your child has a temperature of 38°C or higher (a fever) for more than 5 days
- Your child's symptoms are getting worse, or you are worried

Please ring your GP or 111 for advice

NHS 111 can help if you think your child needs medical help right now. You can get help from NHS 111:

- By using 111 online (if your child is 5 years old or older)
- By calling 111 – you can ask for an interpreter
- By Text Relay – call 18001 111 using text relay, 24 hours a day
- By using signvideo.co.uk/nhs111 if you need British Sign Language

GREEN

- If none of the above red or amber symptoms are present you can continue caring for your child at home



To access more about this and to be able to read this in different languages, please visit our Paediatric Emergency Department webpage on <https://mft.nhs.uk/bronchiolitis/>

