

# Bronchiolitis

## Advice Sheet

Advice Sheet for parents and carers of children aged two years and under

### How long does Bronchiolitis last?

- Bronchiolitis usually lasts **two weeks**, but the cough may go on for a month or more.
- As a parent / carer, you may find this useful to know as it lasts longer than the normal coughs and colds that children get.
- 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 GP.

### How can I help my child?

If your child is not feeding as normal offer them feeds little and often.

- If your child has a fever, you can give him or her paracetamol in the recommended doses. If your child is older than six months old you may also give Ibuprofen.
- At home, we do not recommend giving both Paracetamol and Ibuprofen at the same time together. If your child has not improved after two to three hours you may want to give them the other medicine. Never exceed the dose on the bottle.
- If your child is already taking medicines or inhalers, you should carry on using these. If you find it difficult to get your baby/child to take them, ask your Health Visitor or GP for advice.
- Bronchiolitis is caused by a virus so antibiotics won't help.

Make sure your child is not exposed to tobacco smoke. Remember smoke remains on your clothes even if you smoke outside

**Passive smoking makes breathing problems like bronchiolitis worse.**

### Useful Contacts

If you need advice:

Find your local pharmacy at [www.nhs.uk](http://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.

**NHS 111** is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls from landlines and mobile phones are free.

For online advice and information **NHS Choices:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**If you are worried about your child, trust your instincts.**

**Contact your GP or dial 111.**

Based on Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines (SIGN) 2006 Guideline No. 91  
Bronchiolitis in children -  
<http://www.sign.ac.uk/guidelines/fulltext/91/index.html>

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*This guidance is written in the following context*

This document was arrived at after careful consideration of the evidence available including but not exclusively NICE, SIGN, EBM data and NHS evidence, as applicable. Healthcare professionals are expected to take it fully into account when exercising their clinical judgement. The guidance does not, however, override the individual responsibility of healthcare professionals to make decisions appropriate to the circumstances of the individual patient in consultation with the patient and / or carer.

This was approved by Oxfordshire CCG Clinical Ratification Group on 4th December 2014.

### 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.
- Usually, bronchiolitis is 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, especially very young ones, can have difficulty with breathing or feeding and may need to go to hospital.
- Most children with bronchiolitis get better within about two weeks but the cough may go on longer.

### What are the symptoms?

- 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.
- 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.
- Sometimes their breathing can become more difficult, and your child may not be able to take their full amount of milk by breast or bottle or may want to take a smaller amount more often.
- You may notice fewer wet nappies than usual.
- Your child may vomit after feeding.

## Conditions that could affect your child's breathing

- If your baby was premature
- If your baby is less than 6 weeks old

Or if your child has:

- a lung problem
- a heart problem
- a problem with their immune system
- or any other pre-existing medical condition that may affect their ability to cope with this illness

**If your child meets any of the criteria above please contact your GP or 111 to discuss their symptoms**

## Signs that your child is finding it difficult to breathe

- Rapid breathing
- Needing more effort to breathe
- Nostrils moving
- Pulling in of chest muscles between their ribs
- Pulling of their neck muscles

## What do I do if my child has Bronchiolitis? (traffic light advice)

**Most children with bronchiolitis get better over time, but some children can get worse. You need to regularly check your child and follow the advice below.**



**RED**

**If your child has:**

- blue lips
- **or** if your child is unresponsive or very irritable
- **or** if your child is struggling to breathe
- **or** if your child has unusually long pauses in breathing
- **or** if your child has an irregular breathing pattern



### You need EMERGENCY HELP

Call **999** - you need to be seen at the A&E department

Nearest Hospitals (open 24 hours, seven days a week):

- John Radcliffe, Oxford
- Horton, Banbury
- Royal Berkshire, Reading
- Great Western, Swindon
- Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury

**Bring your child's Red Book with you.**



**AMBER**

**If your child has any one of these below:**

- If your child's health gets worse or you are worried
- or if your child has decreased feeding by more than half
- or your child has less than two wet nappies
- or if your child is vomiting
- or if your child's temperature is above 39°C (102.2°F)
- or if your child is finding it difficult to breathe (for signs see box to the left)



### Seek Medical Advice Today

Ring your GP surgery - Mon-Fri, 8am to 6.30pm

Your GP may want to speak to you on the phone first to give you medical advice. They will arrange to see your child if it is appropriate

At all other times and bank holidays call NHS 111

**Bring your child's Red Book with you.**



**GREEN**

**If none of the features in the red or amber boxes above are present.**



### Self care

Using the advice on this leaflet you can care for your child at home.

If you feel you need advice please contact your **Health Visitor, GP surgery or your local pharmacy** (follow the links at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk))

You can also call **NHS 111**