



Milton Keynes
University Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Bronchiolitis and Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)

A guide for parents

What is bronchiolitis?



Bronchiolitis is an infection of the tiniest airways in your child's lungs causing them to become swollen, which can make it difficult for them to breathe. It's more common in babies and small children up to 2 years old and is typically caused by the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) which is normally seen in the winter months from October to March, peaking in December and January.

Usually, bronchiolitis only causes mild cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose and cough, with most children getting better on their own.

Further symptoms can develop and some children, especially young ones under 6 months, children born prematurely, or those with long-term lung and other pre-existing medical conditions can develop more severe symptoms and may need to be admitted into hospital for further treatment.

Preventing bronchiolitis

It is difficult to prevent bronchiolitis, which can be spread by coughs and sneezes, but there are steps you can take to reduce your child's risk of catching it and help prevent spreading.

You should:

- Wash your hands and your child's hands frequently.
- Wash or wipe toys and surfaces regularly.
- Keep your child at home until their symptoms improve.
- Keep newborn babies away from people with colds and flu.
- Make sure your child is never exposed to tobacco smoke as it can seriously damage your child's health and make breathing problems like bronchiolitis worse.



What are the symptoms

- Your child may have a runny nose, cough and sometimes a temperature.
- After a few days, your child's cough may become worse.
- Your child's breathing may become faster than normal and may become noisy.
- In young children it may cause brief pauses in their breathing (Apnoeic episodes).
- Sometimes it may take more effort for your child to breath, and they may not be able to take their usual amount of milk.
- Your child may be sick after feeds and become irritable.
- You may notice fewer wet nappies than usual.

Please use QR code to review clips of abnormal signs in babies.



How can I help my child at home?

- Offer smaller feeds more frequently to help prevent your child getting tired.
- If you feel your child is in discomfort you may want to use Paracetamol and Ibuprofen to take away any aches and pains. We recommend not given these medicines at the same time, but to spread them out through the day. (Please never exceed the dose written on the bottle).
- Holding your baby's head more upright will help them breathe easier when feeding.
- Try saline nose drops to keep the nostrils clear (These can be purchased at your local pharmacy).
- If your child is already taking medicines or inhalers, please continue to give these.

Red flags

If your child has any one of these below

Becomes 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).
Becomes extremely agitated (crying inconsolably despite distraction), confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
Develops 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 **EMERGENCY** help Call 999 or go straight to the nearest Hospital Emergency (A&E) Department.

Try to remember to bring your child's Red Book with you.

If your child has any one of these below

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 becoming 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 nurse or doctor today Please ring your GP surgery during the day or when your GP surgery is closed, please call NHS 111, or attend the urgent care centre
Try to remember to bring your child's Red Book with you.

We recognise that during peak times, access to a health care professional may be delayed. 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.

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

Refer to self-care found on this leaflet - How you can care for your child at home.

If you feel you need advice, please contact your Health Visitor or GP Surgery or your local pharmacy (follow the links at www.nhs.uk) You can also call NHS 111

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www.mkhcharity.org.uk

