

# Bronchiolitis Advice Sheet

(a cause of persistent cough, mild fever and feeding difficulties in infants)

Advice for parents and carers of children younger than 1 year old



## How is your child?



RED

If your child has any of the following:

- Has blue lips
- Has pauses in their breathing (apnoeas) or has an [irregular breathing pattern](#) or starts [grunting](#)
- Severe difficulty in breathing - too breathless to feed
- Becomes pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to touch
- Becomes extremely agitated, confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
- 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 urgent help**  
please phone 999  
or go to the nearest  
Hospital Emergency  
(A&E) Department



AMBER

If your child has any of the following:

- Has laboured/rapid breathing or they are working hard to breath - drawing in of the muscles below their lower ribs, at their neck or between their ribs ([recession](#)).
- Seems dehydrated (sunken eyes, drowsy or no urine passed for 12 hours)
- Is becoming drowsy (excessively sleepy)
- Seems to be getting worse or if you are worried

**You need to contact a doctor or nurse today.**  
Please ring your GP surgery or call NHS 111 - dial 111



GREEN

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

**Self Care**  
Using the advice below  
you can provide the  
care your child needs  
at home

## How can I look after my child?

- If your child is not feeding as normal offer smaller feeds but more frequently. Offer.....ounces every.....hours
- Children with bronchiolitis may have some signs of distress and discomfort. You may wish to give either Paracetamol or liquid Ibuprofen to give some relief of symptoms (Paracetamol can be given from 2 months of age). Please read and follow the instructions on the medicine container.
- 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 GP. **Bronchiolitis is caused by a virus so antibiotics will not help.**
- Make sure your child is not exposed to tobacco smoke. Passive smoking can seriously damage your child's health. It makes breathing problems like bronchiolitis worse.
- Remember smoke remains on your clothes even if you smoke outside.

If you would like help to give up smoking you can get information / advice from your local GP surgery or by calling the National Stop Smoking Helpline Tel: 0800 169 0 169 from 7am to 11pm every day.

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## What is Bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is an infection that causes the tiniest airways in your child's lungs to become swollen. This can make it more difficult for your child to breathe:

- Bronchiolitis is caused by virus infections.
- It is common in 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.

## What are the symptoms?

- Your child may have a runny nose and sometimes 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 the very young babies, bronchiolitis may cause them to have brief pauses in their breathing.
- If you are concerned see the traffic light advice overleaf.
- As breathing becomes more difficult, your baby may not be able to take their usual amount of milk by breast or bottle.
- You may notice fewer wet nappies than usual.
- Your child may vomit after feeding and become miserable.

## 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 more weeks. Antibiotics are not required.
- Your 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 child is recovering well. But if you are worried about your child's progress discuss this with your Health Visitor, Practice Nurse or GP or contact NHS 111.