



# Bronchiolitis

Patient and Family Education

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**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's health care team about specific care for your child.**

## **What is bronchiolitis?**

Bronchiolitis is an illness in babies and young children up to about 18 months of age. It affects the smallest airways (bronchioles) of the lungs. It is caused by a virus. One virus that causes it is called RSV. RSV stands for Respiratory Syncytial Virus. Antibiotics will not help bronchiolitis because antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses.

The illness can last up to a month. Breathing problems usually last 2 to 7 days, but the cough may continue for some time. After this illness, your baby may have a worse cough and may wheeze with colds.

## **What are the possible symptoms?**

Bronchiolitis usually begins with cold-like symptoms. It may progress to wheezing, fast breathing, coughing, fever and trouble feeding.

## **What is the treatment?**

Mild cases can be treated at home. Sometimes your baby may need to stay in the hospital. Your baby's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your baby. Some general guidelines to follow include:

### **If your baby is admitted to the hospital:**

- Your baby's temperature, heart rate, and breathing will be monitored. Your child's breathing will be checked to help decide whether he needs oxygen. A machine called a pulse oximeter may be used to measure his oxygen levels.
- Our staff may use suction devices to keep his nose clear of mucus.
- You will need to learn how to use the bulb suction and help with your baby's care.
- Your baby may be given a trial breathing treatment. If the treatment helps, it will be given regularly. If it does not help, no more breathing treatments will be given.
- Once your baby starts improving, his care team will help you learn how to take care of him at home.
- Your baby may be placed in "Isolation" in case he has something contagious (catchy). This means our staff take extra measures to keep germs from spreading. Staff may wear masks, gowns or gloves when caring for your baby.
- Washing your hands often and well can also help keep germs from spreading to others.

### **You can plan on going home when:**

- Your baby is breathing slower and easier and he does not need oxygen.
- Your baby is drinking well.
- Any medicines, if still needed, can be given at home.
- You and your baby's caretakers can use a bulb suction to keep his nose and mouth clear.
- You and your baby's doctor feel that he is ready for discharge.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

## ***Bronchiolitis, continued***

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### ***For your baby's care at home:***

- Give your baby plenty of rest. Most do not feel well enough to be very active.
- Give your baby plenty to drink. Give him small amounts of liquids often.
- Suction the nose or mouth with a bulb syringe as needed, especially before a feeding. This helps keep your baby from coughing and gagging during his feeding.
- Use salt water (saline) drops before you suction the nose if needed.
- Avoid cigarette smoke and odor around your baby.

### **Medicines**

- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol or other less costly store brand) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or other less costly store brand) for fever, aches and pain. Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your doctor how much medicine to give.
  - **DO NOT** give your baby more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
  - **DO NOT** give acetaminophen to babies younger than 3 months of age without talking with your child's doctor.
  - **DO NOT** give ibuprofen to babies younger than 6 months of age without a doctor's advice.
- **DO NOT** use acetaminophen and ibuprofen together. **DO NOT** alternate. Give cough and cold medicines only as advised by your child's doctor. This includes both prescription and over-the-counter medicines.
  - For children younger than 6 years of age – cough and cold medicines do not work in this age group. They also can cause serious side effects.
  - Do not give a child younger than 6 years old any medicine that is made for children over the age of 6.
  - Many brands of cough and cold medicines have the same kinds or have unnecessary ingredients. Using more than 1 brand or mixing brands can cause a serious overdose and harm in your child.
  - Do not use a combination cold medicine that contains acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

### ***How can I help prevent spreading germs?***

Hand hygiene is the most important thing you can do to help prevent the spread of germs and infections. Teach your children to do these things too. You may use:

- Soap and water - wash your hands well for at least 15 seconds. Rinse and dry them well.
- An alcohol hand cleaner if your hands do not have any visible dirt or grime on them.

### ***When can my baby return to daycare?***

Your baby can return to daycare as soon as your doctor advises. This is usually about 24 hours after the fever is gone without the need of medicines for fever control.

### ***When should I call the doctor?***

#### **Call 911 or your local ambulance service right away if your baby:**

- Is so weak and tired that he hardly responds to you
- Is working **very** hard to breathe or finds it hard to take a breath
- Grunts when he breathes
- Has chest retractions (skin pulling in around the ribs and chest when breathing)
- Has a blue or dark purple color to the nail beds, lips or gums.

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## ***Bronchiolitis, continued***

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- Stops breathing for more than 10 seconds
- Cannot speak while trying to breathe
- Has any breathing problem that needs care **right away**.

### **Call your baby's doctor right away if your baby:**

- Does not smile or show any interest in play during a 4-hour period.
- Wheezes or breathes harder than he did when he was seen by the doctor.
- Is unable to breathe and suck at the same time or chokes often when he sucks
- Has any fever and is younger than 3 months old, or has a fever lasting longer than 3 days in older babies.
- Cannot be calmed for at least a few minutes each hour using methods that usually work for your baby, such as holding, rocking, pacifiers or soothing talk.

Also call the doctor if you:

- See signs of dehydration (drying out):
  - No urine in 6 to 8 hours in an baby younger than 1 year of age
  - No urine in more than 8 hours in a baby or child older than 1 year of age
  - No tears when crying
  - Sunken eyes
  - Dry lips and mouth
- Have any questions or concerns about how your baby looks or feels.

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