

# Caring for your child when bronchiolitis affects their breathing

Children's Emergency Department

Information for Patients

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## What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is an infection causing the smallest airways in your child's lungs to become swollen. This makes it more difficult for your child to breathe and feed. The most common virus which causes this is called respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). It is very common, and about 1 in 3 children will have had bronchiolitis by the age of 1.

Only 2 to 3% of children with bronchiolitis will need to stay in hospital.

## What symptoms does bronchiolitis cause?

The main symptoms are:

- a runny nose.
- dry and persistent cough.

Very young small babies can develop:

- rapid or noisy breathing. Sometimes they work very hard to breathe, and even develop pauses in their breathing, which can be concerning.
- difficulty feeding.

Bronchiolitis is usually worse on day 3 to 5 of the illness. It takes about 2 weeks to get better. Some children will have a cough that will last longer, but this will get better by itself.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## How can I help my child feel better?

- If your child is distressed by their fever, paracetamol may help. Please follow the instructions on the bottle. Your local pharmacist will be able to advise on doses if you are unsure.
- If your child is having problems feeding, giving less feed more often will make it easier for them.
- Antibiotics or inhalers will not help with your child's breathing, or help them get better faster. Both may cause side-effects, so these are not recommended.
- Tobacco smoke, even on clothes, will make your child's breathing worse, so please keep them away from it. If you want advice on stopping smoking please speak to a member of staff, your GP, or visit [www.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree).
- Wash your hands to prevent spreading the virus.
- Keep a close eye on your baby; seek advice if you are worried.

## When does my child need to be in hospital?

Treatment for bronchiolitis involves supporting your child with their breathing and feeding until they start to recover. If they do not need help with either of these things, then they will be more comfortable with you at home.

## What happens if my child is brought into hospital?

- A health professional will assess them to see whether they need help with their breathing or feeding.
- If they need oxygen, it can be given through a mask or tubes.
- Sometimes a small plastic feeding tube is put into the stomach via the nose so they do not have to make the effort of feeding. They can be given their normal milk through this tube.
- Sometime fluids are given through a vein to keep them hydrated.
- Very rarely children become extremely ill and need a breathing tube to help them cope with this illness, but your doctor will talk to you if this happens.

## When should I call for help?

### Call 999 if:

- there are long pauses in your child's breathing.
- your child's lips or tongue are turning blue.
- your child looks exhausted, and will not wake up normally.
- they look pale, sweaty, or an unusual colour.

### Call your GP if:

- your child has taken less than half of their feeds for 2 to 3 feeds, or has had no wet nappies in 12 hours.
- you are very worried about your child.

## Contact details

If you have any concerns you can contact the NHS helpline on 111 for advice.

## Giving us your feedback

We would love to get some feedback on your visit today. Use your smart phone to scan this QR code for quick access to our online feedback survey form.



Or you can access the feedback form from our website:

<https://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/patients/thinking-of-choosing-us/patient-experience/>

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على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
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