

## What can you do to help your baby?

It is important that your baby has enough fluid so that he/she doesn't become dehydrated.

If you are breast feeding, please continue but watch to see if your baby is struggling to feed and taking longer than usual. If you are bottle feeding watch to see if your baby is completing the bottle in the usual amount of time.

Make sure they are still having wet nappies—this tells you that your baby is getting enough fluids.

Keep ill babies away from irritating fumes such as smoke which can make breathing more difficult.

Bronchiolitis is highly infectious. If you have other children it is possible that they will be affected too, so keep toys and surfaces clean. It is important to wash hands thoroughly to avoid spreading the virus.

## How is it treated?

Most cases of bronchiolitis are mild and can be treated at home. If your baby is less than 6 weeks old or has other medical problems such as heart disease, your baby may be referred to see a Paediatrician (children's specialist).

In most cases no medicines or inhalers are needed but a few babies may need help with feeding.

Some babies may need extra oxygen.

### References:

**British Lung Foundation**

**Bronchiolitis in children, SIGN (2006)**



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**CUMBERLAND HOUSE**

**PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CENTRE**

## Bronchiolitis and Your Baby

## What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is inflammation and blockage of the tiniest airways in your baby's lungs. It is usually caused by a virus. Bronchiolitis makes your baby cough and become breathless.

The most common virus to cause of bronchiolitis is Respiratory Syncytial Virus, known as RSV.

## How does bronchiolitis affect your baby?

Bronchiolitis in the UK usually occurs in the winter months (November to March).

Usually Bronchiolitis starts like a simple cold—a runny nose, cough and mild fever are usual for the first 2-3 days.

Typically symptoms peak in severity 2-3 days after starting. The severity of the illness can vary from mild (being a bit worse than a heavy cold) to severe with serious breathing difficulties.

After peaking the symptoms usually gradually settle and go within 1-2 weeks. An irritating cough can linger a bit longer. Some children develop wheezy chests and coughs more easily after a bout of bronchiolitis, especially when they have a cough or a cold.

This usually goes away in time and there is no evidence that bronchiolitis causes asthma.

Most babies get better without treatment at home but some will need to be admitted to hospital. This can happen if they are having difficulty in feeding and coughing a lot or they may have low levels of oxygen in the blood.

## Is it common?

Bronchiolitis accounts for 3% of emergency hospital visits in children less than 2 years old. By the age of 2, nearly all infants will have had at least one RSV infection but in most cases, it will have caused no more than a simple cold.

## Ways to prevent bronchiolitis.

You can help prevent the illness by asking adults and other children who have a viral infection to keep away from your baby if possible.

Make sure that you, your family and anyone who handles your baby washes their hands regularly to avoid passing on the virus which causes bronchiolitis.

Do not smoke or let others smoke around your baby as this makes your baby more likely to pick up an infection and will make the symptoms of the illness worse.

## What symptoms to look out for

Here are some important signs that you should look for in your baby if they seem to have a cold which is going on for longer than usual:

- **Your baby is having more difficulty in feeding.**
- **Your baby is more sleepy or less alert than usual.**
- **Your baby has more, or new, symptoms such as cough, wheeze or difficulty in breathing.**
- **The colour of your baby's skin is changing for example: pale or mottled.**

If you are worried please ask your GP for advice or contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647.

If your baby looks blue or is clearly struggling to breath, call an ambulance immediately.