

Medical & nursing care for your child

If your child is distressed and having trouble breathing and feeding, they may need to be admitted to hospital.

Staff may need to:

- Watch your child closely so that they do not get more unwell
- Give your child oxygen
- Give your child some fluids through a tube in their nose (nasogastric tube) or a drip into a vein (intravenous/IV therapy)

Important points to remember

- Bronchiolitis is common in children under 18 months of age.
- Children with bronchiolitis need to rest and drink small amounts more often.
- Bronchiolitis is infectious in the first few days of the illness.
- Children are usually sick for 3-5 days, and then recover over the next 7-10 days. The cough may continue for up to 4 weeks.
- Smoking in the home increases the chance of children having respiratory illness and can make it worse.
- Antibiotics are not given because bronchiolitis is caused by a virus. Antibiotics don't cure viruses.

Did you know?

If you don't already have a GP you can find a child friendly GP on the web: www.healthforkids.net.au

Southern Health Emergency Departments

Monash Medical Centre

246 Clayton Road, Clayton

Dandenong Hospital

David Street, Dandenong

Casey Hospital

52 Kangan Drive, Berwick

These websites have more information on bronchiolitis and other illnesses:

<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>

www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/

The information provided in this brochure is adapted from the Royal Children's Hospital Parent Information Sheet on Bronchiolitis available at <http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/>

Southern Health

Disclaimer: This health information is for general education purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice. Please consult with your doctor and/or other health care professionals to ensure individualised and appropriate health care is tailored for your child.

Information for Parents of Children with Bronchiolitis



What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is a common chest infection in infants and young children. It usually occurs in children under 18 months, but can occur in older children as well.

A virus in the lungs causes children with bronchiolitis to have difficulty breathing.

Children with bronchiolitis need to rest and have small feeds more often, so they don't get too tired when feeding.

What are the symptoms of bronchiolitis?

The illness begins as a cold. After a day or so your child begins to cough, and their breathing may become fast and sound wheezy. This fast wheezy breathing can make it difficult for your child to drink. Some children may need to be admitted to hospital because of these problems.

The first symptoms your child may have are the same as a common cold. These symptoms usually last for 1-2 days:

- A stuffy or runny nose
- Sneezing
- Cough

These symptoms can be followed by breathing problems, such as:

- Very fast breathing
- Noisy breathing (wheezing)
- Drawing in of the chest wall with each breath
- Poor feeding
- Fever

Children with bronchiolitis are usually worse on the 2nd or 3rd day of the illness and are often sick for 7-10 days. The cough may continue for up to 4 weeks.

What care should I give at home?

Did you know ?
Rest and regular fluids are best for a child with bronchiolitis.

- Encourage rest.
- Give more frequent breast feeds or smaller amounts of fluid more often. This way your child does not get too tired when feeding. If your child does not get enough drinks they can become dehydrated.
- You can give paracetamol (e.g. Panadol, Dymadon) in the recommended dose if your child is irritable.
- Avoid contact with other babies in the first few days of the illness, as bronchiolitis is an infectious disease.
- Ensure a smoke free environment. Always try not to smoke in the home or around your child. This is especially important for children with any respiratory illness.

Did you know ?
Mist, steam or humidified air have not been shown to help symptoms of bronchiolitis.

When should I take my child to a doctor?

Make an appointment to see your doctor if:

- your child's cough is getting worse
- your child is having less than half their normal feeds or are refusing drinks
- your child seems very tired or is more sleepy than usual
- you are worried in any way

When should I take my child to the hospital?

You should go to your nearest hospital if your child:

- has difficulty breathing (very fast or not regular breaths)
- cannot feed properly because of coughing or wheezing
- is changing colour in the face when they cough
- has skin that is pale and sweaty

When should I call an ambulance?

If you are concerned about your child's breathing, call 000 for an ambulance.

Call 000 for an ambulance if your child:

- has great difficulty breathing
- becomes floppy, agitated or collapses
- becomes blue or very pale in the lips or face