

# 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? (traffic light advice)



RED

If your child:

- Has blue lips
- Is unresponsive or extremely drowsy
- Has pauses in their breathing (apnoeas)
- Has an irregular breathing pattern

**You need urgent help**

Go to the nearest Hospital Emergency (A&E) Department or phone 999



AMBER

If your child:

- Has decreased feeding (less than half of normal feeds)
- Is passing significantly less urine than normal
- Is not keeping down fluids
- Has a temperature of above 38°C
- Has breathing that is becoming more laboured
- 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 overleaf you can look after your child at home

## Some useful phone numbers



**GP Surgery**  
(make a note of number here)  
.....

**NHS 111**  
**dial 111**

(available 24 hrs - 7 days a week)

**Children's Ward**  
.....

**Acute Community Nursing Team**  
.....

For online advice: Healthier Together [www.what0-18.nhs.uk](http://www.what0-18.nhs.uk) (available 24 hrs/7 days a week)

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This guidance is written by healthcare professionals from across Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight

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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 can I help my baby?

- 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.

## 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.