

# Bronchiolitis Advice Sheet

Advice for parents and carers of children aged 2 years old and under



## What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is when the smallest air passages in a child's lungs become swollen. This can make it more difficult for your child to breathe. Usually, bronchiolitis is caused by a virus called respiratory syncytial virus (known as RSV). Almost all children will have had an infection caused by RSV by the time they are two years old. It is most common in the 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. Most children with bronchiolitis get better within about two weeks. The cough may go on for a few more weeks.

## What are the symptoms?

- Your child may have a runny nose and sometimes have 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 children, bronchiolitis may cause them to have brief pauses in their breathing.
- Sometimes their breathing can become more difficult, and your child may not be able to take their usual amount of milk by breast or bottle or may want to feed more frequently but take a smaller amount.
- You may notice fewer wet nappies than usual.
- Your child may vomit after feeding and become irritable.

## Below are some other conditions that could affect your child's ability to cope:

- if they have or were:
- a premature baby
  - are less than 6 weeks old
  - a lung problem • a heart problem
  - a problem with your child's immune system
  - or any other pre-existing medical condition that may affect your child's ability to cope with this illness
- Please contact your Practice Nurse or Doctor**

## 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.
- As a parent / carer, you may find this useful to know as it lasts longer than the normal coughs / colds that children get.
- Your child can go back to nursery or day care as soon as he or she is well enough ( feeding normally and with no difficulty in breathing).
- There is usually no need to see your doctor if your child is recovering well. If you are worried about your child's progress, discuss this with your Health Visitor, Practice Nurse or Doctor.

## Some useful telephone numbers:

**If you need advice please try:**  
**Your local pharmacy can be found at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

**Health Visitor:** .....

**Your GP Surgery:** .....

Please contact your GP when the surgery is open or call **NHS 111** when the GP surgery is closed.

**NHS 111** provides advice for urgent care needs. **NHS 111** is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls from landlines and mobile phones are free.

**NHS Choices:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) for online advice and information

**Bucks:**  
**Family Information Service**  
 Tel: **0845 688 4944** or [www.bucksfamilyinfo.org.uk](http://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org.uk);

For common childhood illness advice see:  
[www.childhealthbucks.com](http://www.childhealthbucks.com)

**Berks:**  
**Family Information Service - Slough**  
 Tel: **01753 476589** or [www.servicesguide.slough.gov.uk](http://www.servicesguide.slough.gov.uk);  
**Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead** Tel: **01628 685632** or  
[www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/cis.htm](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/cis.htm)

For common childhood illness advice see:  
[www.childhealthslough.com](http://www.childhealthslough.com)  
[www.childhealthwam.com](http://www.childhealthwam.com);

**If you are worried about your child, trust your instincts.**  
**Contact your GP or dial NHS 111.**

For more copies of this document please email: [chilternccg@nhs.net](mailto:chilternccg@nhs.net)  
 If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please contact **Family Information Service** web links as above.

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**NHS** Chiltern Clinical Commissioning Group  
**NHS** Aylesbury Vale Clinical Commissioning Group  
**NHS** Slough Clinical Commissioning Group  
 Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead Clinical Commissioning Group

This guidance is written in the following context:

This document was arrived at after careful consideration of the evidence available including but not exclusively NICE, SIGN, EBM data and NHS evidence, as applicable. Healthcare professionals are expected to take it fully into account when exercising their clinical judgement. The guidance does not, however, override the individual responsibility of healthcare professionals to make decisions appropriate to the circumstances of the individual patient in consultation with the patient and / or carer.

[www.chilternccg.nhs.org](http://www.chilternccg.nhs.org) [www.aylesburyvaleccg.nhs.uk](http://www.aylesburyvaleccg.nhs.uk)  
[www.sloughccg.nhs.uk](http://www.sloughccg.nhs.uk) [www.windsoracotmaidenheadccg.nhs.uk](http://www.windsoracotmaidenheadccg.nhs.uk)

## How can I help my baby?

- If your child is not feeding as normal, offer smaller feeds more frequently.
- If your child is distressed or you feel they are in discomfort you may use medicines (Paracetamol or Ibuprofen) to help them feel more comfortable. However, you may not need to use these medicines.
- At home, we do not recommend giving both Paracetamol and Ibuprofen at the same time together. If your child has not improved after 2-3 hours you may want to give them the other medicine. Never exceed the dose on the bottle.
- Please read and follow the instructions on the medicine container. Over the counter (OTC) medicines may not be available to purchase for all age groups. Ask your pharmacist.
- 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 Doctor for advice.
- Bronchiolitis is caused by a virus so antibiotics will not help.

## Passive smoking affects your baby - if you would like help to stop smoking:

- Make sure your child is never exposed to tobacco smoke. Passive smoking can seriously damage your child's health. It can make breathing problems like bronchiolitis worse. Remember smoke remains on your clothes when you smoke anywhere including outside.
- If you would like help to stop smoking, please contact:  
Buckinghamshire  
Stop Smoking Bucks – Tel: 0845 2707222  
Email: stopsmoking@buckshealthcare.nhs.uk  
Berkshire  
SmokefreelifeBerkshire - Tel: 0800 6226360  
or send a SMS QUIT to 66777  
Email: info@smokefreelife.berkshire.co.uk

## What do I do if my child has bronchiolitis? (traffic light advice)

**Most children with bronchiolitis get better over time, but some children can get worse. You need to regularly check your child and follow the advice below.**

<b>RED</b>	<p>If your child has any one of these below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has blue lips</li> <li>• <b>or</b> is unresponsive or very irritable</li> <li>• <b>or</b> is struggling to breathe</li> <li>• <b>or</b> has unusually long pauses in breathing</li> <li>• <b>or</b> has an irregular breathing pattern</li> </ul>	筋	<p><b>You need EMERGENCY help</b></p> <p>Call <b>999</b> or go straight to the nearest Hospital Emergency (A&amp;E) Department</p> <p>Nearest Hospitals (open 24 hours 7 days a week):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frimley Park, Surrey</li> <li>• Hillingdon Hospital</li> <li>• John Radcliffe, Oxford</li> <li>• Milton Keynes Hospital</li> <li>• Royal Berkshire, Reading</li> <li>• Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Aylesbury</li> <li>• Wexham Park Hospital, Slough</li> </ul> <p><b>Bring your child's Red Book with you.</b></p>
<b>AMBER</b>	<p>If your child has any one of these below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If your child's health gets worse or you are worried</li> <li>• <b>or</b> has decreased feeding by 50% (half)</li> <li>• <b>or</b> is passing less urine than normal</li> <li>• <b>or</b> is vomiting</li> <li>• <b>or</b> temperature is above 38°C</li> <li>• <b>or</b> is finding it difficult to breathe</li> <li>• Please see box "conditions that could affect your child's ability to cope" overleaf</li> </ul>	筋	<p><b>You need to contact a nurse or doctor today</b></p> <p>Please ring your GP surgery during the day or when your GP surgery is closed, please call <b>NHS 111</b></p> <p><b>Bring your child's Red Book with you.</b></p>
<b>GREEN</b>	<p>If none of the features in the red or amber boxes above are present.</p>	筋	<p><b>Self care</b></p> <p>Using the advice on this leaflet you can care for your child at home.</p> <p>If you feel you need advice please contact your <b>Health Visitor or GP Surgery</b> or your <b>local pharmacy</b> (follow the links at <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a>)</p> <p>You can also call <b>NHS 111</b></p>