



Parent Information: Bronchiolitis



Cork Emergency Medicine

<http://EMed.ie>

What is it?

Bronchiolitis is a common chest infection, especially affecting infants < 12 months age.

It is most often caused by a viral infection in the lungs. It causes swelling and mucous build up in the small airway tubules of the lungs, making it difficult for your baby to breathe.

Symptoms

It begins as a cold: sneezing, runny or blocked nose, cough.

Next, your baby may have some difficulty breathing, including:

- Fast breathing
- Noisy breathing that sounds wheezy (like a whistle)
- Head bobbing; flaring nostrils or skin under the neck or ribs sucking in.

Other signs

- Irritability
- Fever
- Inability to finish feeds

Note that symptoms are worst on day 3, may persist up to 10 days and coughing can continue up to 4 weeks

Diagnosis?

Bronchiolitis is diagnosed by the symptoms, and by clinical examination. Blood tests, chest x-rays and nose swabs are not effective to diagnose bronchiolitis.

Treatment

Most babies need no hospital intervention and can recover at home. Some babies who need admission require tube feeding: a small tube passed through the nostril into the stomach is a safe and effective way to assist your child with feeding.

Occasionally if your baby is very unwell, an intravenous cannula will be inserted for fluid support through your baby's vein.

Supporting your baby's breathing with supplemental oxygen if there is difficulty breathing.

Medicines such as corticosteroids, nebulisers, inhalers or antibiotics are not proven to help for infants with bronchiolitis, and causes unnecessary distress.

Most babies qualify for home treatment after medical review Give smaller feeds of formula or breastfeed more frequently. This provides an adequate feed without tiring you baby.

If your baby has a blocked nose, saline nose drops can assist in clearing the nasal passages.

Special precautions

The virus is contagious for the first few days, and is spread through contact with mucous and saliva. Your child can safely return back to crèche once symptoms have resolved or after 1 week.

Red flags: take your child back to a doctor urgently

- If your baby has difficulty feeding and is feeding less than half the usual amount.
- If your baby has any of the symptoms of difficult breathing above.
- If your baby becomes pale and sweaty, or blue
- If your baby is unable to feed because they are coughing too much
- If your baby is too sleepy and difficult to wake.
- If your baby cries without tears or has less wet nappies.

Content by Dr Lizeri Jansen , Dr Rory O'Brien, PEM at CUH, 2019/12/14

If you are concerned, please contact the Emergency Department you first attended:	Mercy University Hospital (021) 230 5011	M-UCC at SMHC (St. Mary's Health Campus) (021) 4926900	CUH (021) 4920200	Local Injury Unit Mallow General Hospital (022) 58506	Bantry General Hospital (027) 52900
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