

What is Bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is a chest infection caused by a virus, the most common of which is called RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus). It affects babies in the first year of life, usually in the winter.

How can I tell if my baby has Bronchiolitis?

Usually the baby first develops symptoms of a cold such as runny nose, cough and fever. After a day or two, the coughing becomes worse and the baby may make a wheezing sound. This happens because the virus affects the small breathing tubes (bronchioles) in the lungs and they become narrower.

Sometimes babies may have difficulty breathing, feeding, and/or sleeping.

How long does it last?

The wheezing and difficulty with breathing lasts for several days and then gradually improves. The cough usually lasts 10-14 days but may last for as long as a month.

How can Bronchiolitis be treated?

- Most babies with bronchiolitis can be cared for at home.
- Because Bronchiolitis is caused by a virus there is no medicine that will 'cure' it. Antibiotics will not help.
- Babies need to rest
- Keep baby warm but not too hot.
- Offer small frequent feeds of breast milk or infant formula.
- Full feeds may be tiring for babies with bronchiolitis and cause vomiting.
- Sometimes babies need to be admitted to hospital because of breathing or feeding difficulties or if they are not able to get enough oxygen.
- Saline drops will help clear your baby's nose if it is blocked.
- Although bronchiolitis may look like asthma, the medicines used to treat asthma do not work in young babies with Bronchiolitis.

Bronchiolitis is very infectious and contact with other babies should be avoided.

Do not allow anybody to smoke near your baby. Smoke free children recover faster and keep healthier.

Will my baby get Bronchiolitis again?

Some babies are more likely to get wheezing with viruses. If babies have repeated wheeze and chest infections with viruses, we may start to call it recurrent viral induced wheeze.

How can my baby catch Bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is very infectious. It is passed on by infected secretions from the nose being carried on hands or toys and less often, by coughing. The virus is usually caught from a close contact who has a cold or cough.

What can be done to lessen the spread of Bronchiolitis?

- There is no way of preventing bronchiolitis but there are things you can do at home to lessen the spread of infection.
- Wash your hands before and after handling your baby.
- If you have a cold yourself, wash your hands before handling your children.
- When you have a cold, use tissues only once and throw used tissues away immediately.
- Make sure your baby's toys are not passed around other children, especially if they have colds.
- If anyone has a cold, especially toddlers or young children, try not to let them kiss or touch the baby's face or hands.
- Most children are contagious for up to 10 days – may be longer in young babies.

Seek Medical help if your baby:

- Stops breathing
- There is any blueness of your baby's lips
- Is working hard to breath or is breathing faster than usual
- Is not feeding or having less than normal feeds
- Has a high temperature
- Pale or floppy

Information on your child's admission will be sent to your GP.

Have you changed your GP? If so, do we have your current GP recorded correctly?

If you do not have a regular GP, please talk to your nurse who can give you a list of GPs in your area.

If you have been discharged from the Children's Acute Assessment Unit, one of the nurses will phone you the next day to check on your child's progress and answer any questions you may have.

If you are concerned over the next 24 hours, please contact us on 364 0428.

Continue to contact your GP for ongoing care of your child.

Children's health website: www.kidshealth.org.nz

Christchurch Hospital website: www.cdhb.govt.nz

