

# Bronchiolitis and Your Child

## What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is a lung infection caused by a virus. Children under age two get this illness in the winter and the early spring. Most children are sick about a week and then get well.

## What are the symptoms of bronchiolitis?

Your child will probably have a runny nose and a slight fever for two to three days. Then your child may begin to cough, breathe fast and wheeze for another two or three days.

## What can I do for my child?

There are some things you can do when your child has bronchiolitis:

- Have your child drink liquids (don't worry about solid foods).
- Use a cool-mist vaporizer in the bedroom while the child is sleeping.
- Run hot water in the shower or bathtub to steam up the bathroom and sit in there with your child if he or she is coughing hard and having trouble breathing.
- Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol), if he or she has a fever.

## When should I call the doctor?



You should call your doctor if:

- Your child is vomiting and can't keep liquids down.
- Your child is breathing very fast, more than 40 breaths in one minute.
- You can see your child's skin pull in between the ribs with each breath or your child has to sit up to be able to breathe.
- Your child has had heart disease or was born prematurely. In this case, call the doctor at the first signs of this illness.

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## What will my doctor do for my child?

Your doctor will check your child for signs of *dehydration* (not enough liquids in his or her body). Your doctor will also check to see if your child is getting enough oxygen and may want to check your child for pneumonia. Sometimes, doctors give children a liquid medicine to help with the cough. Your doctor may want to see your child again in 24 hours.

If your child is really working hard to breathe, your doctor may suggest putting him or her in the hospital. Your child can get extra oxygen while in the hospital. Your child can also get extra liquids through the veins (intravenous fluids), which will help prevent dehydration.

## Will my other children catch bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is spread just like a cold, through close contact with saliva or mucus, but older children usually don't catch this illness.

You can help prevent spreading this disease by keeping your sick child home until the cough is almost gone. Make sure to wash your hands after you take care of your sick child and before you take care of another child.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.



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