

## Bronchiolitis

### What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis (bron-kee-oh-lite-iss) is an infection of the small airways in the lungs. It is common in babies and young children during the winter and early spring. It is usually caused by a virus, most commonly, respiratory syncytial virus or RSV. Babies usually get better without any treatment. In some cases, babies may need to be admitted to the hospital.

### Prevention of bronchiolitis:

- Keep your child away from places where there are a lot of sick kids such as daycares.
- Wash your hands well and often
- Check with your health care provider if your child was born premature, less than 35 weeks, as your child may need medicine to prevent RSV bronchiolitis.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke in the house or car.

### What are the signs of bronchiolitis?

Some or all of these signs may start a few days after a cold begins:

- Congested cough, runny nose
- Breathing fast
- Noisy breathing, wheezing
- Low grade fever
- Trouble eating or sleeping
- Poor appetite

### How should I care for my child?

- Use a bulb syringe to remove mucus from a baby's nose and mouth before feeding, sleeping, and as needed.
- Use saline nose drops to reduce a stuffy nose before feedings and naptimes.
- Encourage extra fluids. This will prevent dehydration (getting dried out), and make the mucus thinner.
- Do not give cough or cold medicines without checking with your doctor.

### When should I call the doctor?

- Temperature higher than 100.4° F rectally if your child is younger than 2 months
- Drinking or eating poorly
- Looks sick
- Severe coughing spells, or coughing with choking or gagging
- **Signs of dehydration:**
  - Sleeping a lot more than normal
  - No tears when crying
  - Less urine than normal
- **Signs of difficult breathing:**
  - Unable to drink or suck
  - Fast or noisy breathing; wheezing
  - Working hard to breathe
  - Retractions (skin pulling in around ribs with breaths)
  - Nostrils open wider with breathing in
  - Blue or gray lips or fingernails - **call 911**

## **If my child is admitted to the hospital, what should I expect during the hospital stay?**

- Your child may receive oxygen.
- Your child may have an intravenous line (IV) to provide liquids until your child can eat and drink well.
- Your child will be closely monitored.
- Your child may be given medicine in the form of a mist to breathe into his/her lungs.

## **When will my child be ready to go home?**

Your child will be ready to go home when:

- He/she is drinking well
- His/her breathing has improved
- He/she is no longer requiring oxygen
- Education is completed regarding care of your child at home

## **Questions?**

This sheet is not specific to your child, but provides general information. If you have any questions, please call the clinic.

For more reading material about this and other health topics, please call or visit the Family Resource Center library, or visit our Web site: [www.childrensmn.org](http://www.childrensmn.org).