



# Bronchiolitis

**Bronchiolitis is a common illness in young children most often caused by various viruses. Viruses spread when someone who is sick coughs near us, or when our hands are dirty and we touch our mouths, eyes or nose. Bronchiolitis most often happens during the winter months.**



It starts with symptoms similar to a common cold such as a runny or congested nose, sneezing, coughing and fever, and then a few days later continued coughing, faster and harder breathing, as well as noisy breathing (a wheezing sound), and difficulty drinking fluids. Bronchiolitis usually improves after the first week, but some symptoms can take several weeks to go away completely.

## **Treatment**

There is no specific medicine that can help bronchiolitis go away. This is a viral illness that goes away on its own with time. While your child may have symptoms similar to asthma, this is not asthma and does not respond to the same medications used for children with asthma. Your doctor may prescribe some medication for your child because they feel there is another illness that needs to be treated.

## **When to see a doctor**

You should take your child to see a doctor if:

- Your baby is less than two months old and has a fever.
- You are worried your child is not able to drink enough to stay hydrated (either because of congestion, coughing, vomiting or difficulty breathing).
- You feel your child is having trouble breathing.
- Your child has a medical condition that puts them at higher risk for having difficulties with illnesses like bronchiolitis.



### **How to care for your child at home**

#### **Make sure the air in your home isn't too dry**

During the winter months, using a humidifier in your home, or taking walks outside in the cool humid air may help your child breathe and rest more easily.

#### **Make sure your child drinks enough fluids**

Nasal suctioning with saline water and a nasal aspirator before your child drinks can be helpful, and is safe at any age.

### **When hospital admission is needed**

On very rare occasions, some children become more seriously sick with bronchiolitis and need to be kept in the hospital for a period of time to get hydration with intravenous fluids, and extra oxygen and other help for their breathing.

This kind of treatment is called supportive care, since there is no specific medicine that can cure bronchiolitis even in children who are more seriously ill.

