



What is Bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is a lung infection caused by a virus. The average age of children who get bronchiolitis is 6 months. They are never older than 2 years.

The symptoms of bronchiolitis include:

- wheezing (making a high-pitched whistling sound when breathing out)
- breathing rapidly at a rate of over 40 breaths per minute
- coughing (may cough up very sticky mucus)
- a fever and a runny nose that precede the breathing problems and cough.

What is the cause?

The wheezing is caused by a narrowing of the smallest airways in the lung (bronchioles). This narrowing results from inflammation (swelling) caused by a virus, usually the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). RSV occurs in epidemics almost every winter.

The virus is found in nasal secretions of infected people. It is spread by an infected person who sneezes or coughs less than 6 feet away from someone else or by his or her hands after touching the nose or eyes.

How long does it last?

Wheezing and tight breathing (trouble breathing out) become worse for 2 or 3 days and then improve. Overall, the wheezing lasts approximately 7 days and the cough can last as long as 2-3 weeks.

Only 1% or 2% of children with bronchiolitis are hospitalized because they need oxygen or intravenous fluids. In the long run, approximately 30% of the children who develop bronchiolitis later develop asthma. Recurrences of wheezing (asthma) occur mainly in children who have close relatives with asthma. Asthma is treated with medicines.

How can I take care of my child?

• Medicines

About 1/3 of children with bronchiolitis are helped by asthma-type medicines.

Your child's medicine is _____. Give _____ every _____ hours. Continue the medicine until your child's wheezing is gone for 24 hours.

In addition, you can give your child acetaminophen every 4 to 6 hours or ibuprofen every 6 to 8 hours if the fever is over 102°F (39°C) for infants older than 3 months old.

• Warm fluids for coughing spasms

Coughing spasms are often caused by sticky secretions in the back of the throat. Warm liquids usually relax the airway and loosen the secretions, such as lemonade or apple juice if your child is over 4 months old.

In addition, breathing warm, moist air helps to loosen up the sticky mucus that may be choking your child. Use a warm humidifier in child's bedroom.

• Suction of a blocked nose

If the nose is blocked, your child will not be able to drink from a bottle or to breast-feed. Use warm tap-water or saline nosedrops, place three drops of warm water or saline in each nostril, and use a soft rubber suction bulb to suck out the mucus. For severe congestion, you may use Afrin nasal spray 1 spray in each nostril 1-2 times per day for 3 days.

- **Feedings**

Encourage your child to drink enough fluids. Eating is often tiring, so offer your child formula, breast milk, or regular milk (if he is over 1 year old) in smaller amounts at more frequent intervals. If your child vomits during a coughing spasm, feed him or her again.

- **No smoking**

Tobacco smoke aggravates coughing. Don't let anyone smoke around your child.

When should I call my child's healthcare provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- Breathing becomes labored or difficult.
- Breathing becomes faster than 60 breaths per minute (when your child is not crying).
- You have other questions or concerns.