

Bronchiolitis

This leaflet offers more information about bronchiolitis. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your child's care.

What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is a condition affecting the smaller airways (bronchioles) of younger children. Children up to two years old can develop bronchiolitis but it usually occurs between the ages of three to six months, with around a third of children in the UK developing bronchiolitis before their first birthday.

Bronchiolitis is caused by a virus, most commonly Respiratory Syncytial Virus. Other viruses that may cause bronchiolitis include Enterovirus, Human Metapneumovirus, Adenovirus and Parainfluenza. The virus causes the small airways in the lungs to become swollen, making it harder for your child to breathe.

Risk Factors

There are some social factors that make your child more likely to develop bronchiolitis. These include:

- Passive smoking
- Older siblings/contacts
- Living in an overcrowded space.

There are also other factors that make your child more likely to develop a severe episode of bronchiolitis or complications associated with bronchiolitis. These include:

- Prematurity < 32 weeks gestation
- Heart disease
- Low birth weight
- Lung disease (e.g. cystic fibrosis, bronchopulmonary dysplasia)
- Having a weakened immune system
- Being less than three months old.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Runny nose
- Cough
- Faster and sometimes noisier breathing
- Change in breathing pattern (including pauses in breathing)
- Feeding less than usual (fewer wet nappies than normal)
- Fever.

Does my child need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

The doctor will examine your baby for signs of them working harder to breathe and look for lower oxygen levels than normal. They will also use the information you give them and the appearance of your child to show signs of dehydration.

If your baby needs admission to hospital, a swab may be performed to identify which virus caused the illness. Occasionally a chest X-ray is ordered if the team suspects a complication of bronchiolitis or a condition which may make your child suffer from a more severe episode of bronchiolitis.

What treatments are available?

Most children do not need any treatment for bronchiolitis. They usually get better within a couple of weeks. Symptoms are at their worst between days three to five of the illness. Your baby's cough may continue for a couple of weeks after the other symptoms have gone away.

If your baby has low oxygen levels or isn't feeding enough, they may be admitted to hospital to be given extra oxygen or to be fed through a tube in their nose.

What happens if I do not get treatment?

The majority of children will recover on their own without treatment. You should always see a doctor if your baby:

- Is taking less than half his or her usual feeds
- Has had no wet nappy for 12 hours
- Seems very tired or irritable
- Has another condition that makes them at higher risk of a more severe episode (listed earlier).

Call an ambulance if:

- **Your baby is having a lot of difficulty breathing and is pale or sweaty.**
- **Your baby's lips or tongue are turning blue.**
- **There are long pauses in your baby's breathing.**

Is there anything I can do to help my child?

- Offer smaller feeds more often than normal if feeding is difficult
- Give paracetamol if they have a fever and are upset
- Saline drops can help a blocked nose
- Avoid exposure to smoke
- Watch for signs that your baby is getting worse.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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