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[www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com](http://www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com)

## **Bronchiolitis**

### **What is bronchiolitis?**

Bronchiolitis is a common respiratory illness in infants and young children (usually less than 2 years of age), that causes the small airways of the lungs (the bronchioles) to become inflamed and swell. This hinders some airflow through the lungs, making it hard for the child to breathe. It is common in infants because their airways are smaller and more easily blocked than in older children. Adults and children older than 2 years of age who come in contact with a child with bronchiolitis usually just develop cold symptoms. Bronchiolitis is not the same as bronchitis, which is an infection in the larger upper airways, which is more common in adults.

It is caused by several viruses, most commonly Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and is most common from October to March. Other viruses can cause the symptoms of bronchiolitis as well.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of bronchiolitis?**

Bronchiolitis usually starts out by looking like a common cold with runny nose, cough, and fever. Usually symptoms will progress and worsen in the first 1-2 days. These are some common symptoms in children that will let you know that they are having difficulty breathing:

- ✓ The child may wheeze, which is a high-pitched whistling noise when breathing out.
- ✓ The child may have trouble breastfeeding or drinking from a bottle or cup because of significant congestion or rapid breathing. It is important to look for signs of dehydration, such as dry mouth, decreased urine production, and crying without tears.
- ✓ When breathing in and out, you may see the muscles around the ribs and under the rib cage move in and out more as the child is using extra muscles of the chest to get the air in and out of the lungs.
- ✓ You may hear persistent grunting and tightening of the stomach muscles.
- ✓ The child's respiratory rate will be increased, even at rest.



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- ✓ If the child is having much difficulty with breathing, you may notice a bluish tint around the lips and fingernails.

***\*\* If your child is demonstrating these signs of troubled breathing, please call our office right away.***

Generally the wheezing may last about 7 days and the cough usually is resolved by 2-3 weeks. The most common complication of bronchiolitis is an ear infection. Only 1-2 % of children need to be hospitalized for this illness. Long term, approximately 10% of children who get bronchiolitis as young children will develop recurrences with wheezing and may go on to develop asthma.

### **What is the treatment if my child has bronchiolitis?**

Bronchiolitis is caused by viruses, so antibiotics are not helpful because they are used to treat bacteria. There is no specific treatment for bronchiolitis, but there are ways to help your child be more comfortable with the symptoms.

Runny Nose: The amount of runny nose with bronchiolitis is usually substantial. You can use infant saline nose drops (non-medicated) and a suction bulb every 2-3 hours as needed, especially before feeding times and before bed. Place 1-2 drops of saline in each nostril, wait 30-60 seconds and then suction. Always point the end of the suction bulb to the outer parts of the nostril to help prevent irritation and nosebleeds.

Fever: You can help control a child's temperature with acetaminophen or ibuprofen (only use ibuprofen if the child is older than 6 mos of age). Follow the dosing recommended for the baby's age and weight. A fever sheet with recommended dosing can be found on our website:

[www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com](http://www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com).

Prevent dehydration: Please make sure to have the child drink plenty of fluids. Clear fluids such as water and pedialyte may be tolerated better than milk. It may be necessary to do smaller feedings more often to keep the child hydrated. The child may not have an appetite for solid foods and that is okay for a few days as long as they are taking in enough fluids.

Congestion: A cool mist humidifier may help to loosen mucus and can be used while the child is sleeping. Occasionally, you can also take the child into a steamy bathroom and that will help loosen sticky mucus as well.



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**Coughing:** Warm fluids may help with coughing spasms, which are caused by sticky mucus in the back of the throat. You can use warm lemonade or apple juice in infants greater than 4 mos. In children older than 1 year of age, you can also use a teaspoon of honey three times per day either in the juice or directly by spoon.

If the child is having mild to moderate trouble breathing while in the office, we may try to use a medication that helps to open the small airways and help the child breathe better. This medicine, if it helps, may be continued at home by way of a nebulizer.

Some children need to be treated in the emergency room or hospital for their breathing problems or dehydration. They may require IV fluids, oxygen, or extra medicine to help them breathe.

### **How can I prevent my baby from getting bronchiolitis?**

Make sure that everyone washes their hand before touching your baby and keep your child away from anyone who has symptoms of a cold or bronchiolitis. Remember that you should **never** expose your child to tobacco smoke, especially when they are sick.

### **The treatment plan for your baby includes all of the above recommendations, as well as:**

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please call our office.