

# BRONCHIOLITIS

Bronchiolitis is an infection of the small breathing tubes of the lungs (called "bronchioles") that occurs in infants and young children. The infection causes the breathing tubes to swell and become plugged with mucus and thus makes it hard for the child to breathe. Symptoms of bronchiolitis include runny nose, cough, and sometimes wheezing and trouble breathing. Most episodes of bronchiolitis amount to nothing more than a chest cold, but a small number of cases can become more serious.

Bronchiolitis is often caused by a virus called respiratory syncytial virus (commonly known as "RSV"), but may be caused by a number of other viruses as well. Since it is caused by a virus and not bacteria, antibiotics are not useful in treating bronchiolitis.

## Treatments for Bronchiolitis

- Run a cool-mist humidifier in your child's bedroom;
- Give your child a steamy bath or shower to help loosen thick mucus from the nose or throat, especially before bedtime;
- If your child's nose is clogged with thick or dried mucus, drip 3 or 4 drops of saline nose drops (available over-the-counter at any pharmacy) in each nostril and then suction with a nasal suction bulb;
- Give acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil or Motrin) for fever or discomfort;
- Assure that your child remains well hydrated by offering frequent opportunities to drink fluids;
- In more severe cases of bronchiolitis, the doctor may recommend certain medications or even hospitalization for more careful monitoring.
- A child with bronchiolitis has about a 1 in 3 or 4 chance of developing an ear infection; if your child shows signs of an ear infection (a new fever developing during an episode of bronchiolitis, increased fussiness or poor sleeping, tugging at ears), you should call the office for an appointment.

### **Please call the office IMMEDIATELY for:**

- Trouble breathing—may be seen as nose flaring out with every breath, skin retracting between or under ribs with every breath, or grunting with every breath, too breathless to speak or make normal baby sounds
- Blue or gray color of the child's skin
- Signs of dehydration—refusing to drink, no urine output for more than 8 hours, lethargic

### **Please call the office during REGULAR OFFICE HOURS for:**

- Signs of an ear infection
- Wheezing that you can hear without a stethoscope