

Bronchiolitis (RSV): Caring for Your Baby at Home

Pediatrics · Respiratory (RSV, Asthma, Croup)

Bronchiolitis is an infection from a cold virus, often RSV. It swells the small airways in the lungs and fills them with mucus. It is usually worst on days 3 to 5, then slowly gets better.

Clear your baby's nose

- Put 2 to 3 saline (salt water) drops in each nostril.
- Wait 1 minute, then gently suction with a bulb syringe.
- Do this before feeds and before sleep.
- Wash the bulb in warm, soapy water after each use.

Feed often and count diapers

- Give small feeds more often. Keep breastfeeding.
- Count wet diapers. **Call if your baby has fewer than 1 wet diaper every 8 hours.**

Position your baby safely

- Hold your baby upright while awake to ease breathing.
- **Always place your baby on the back to sleep, on a firm, flat surface.**
- Do not use pillows, wedges, or a car seat for sleep.

Skip the wrong medicines

- Antibiotics do not help. A virus causes this illness.
- Do not give cough or cold medicines.
- For fever, ask about acetaminophen (Tylenol) by weight.

Stop the spread

- Wash your hands often. Keep your baby away from smoke and vaping.
- Ask about RSV protection: a shot for your baby, or a vaccine during pregnancy.

Call your provider today if you have

- A baby who takes less than half of the usual feeds
- A baby under 3 months with any fever: call right away
- A baby with a fever for more than 3 days or ear pulling
- A baby whose breathing gets worse after getting better

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- A baby whose skin pulls in between the ribs with each breath
- A baby who breathes very fast or very hard, or grunts
- A baby with pauses in breathing or blue lips
- A baby too tired to feed or hard to wake

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/bronchiolitis-rsv-at-home/patient

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