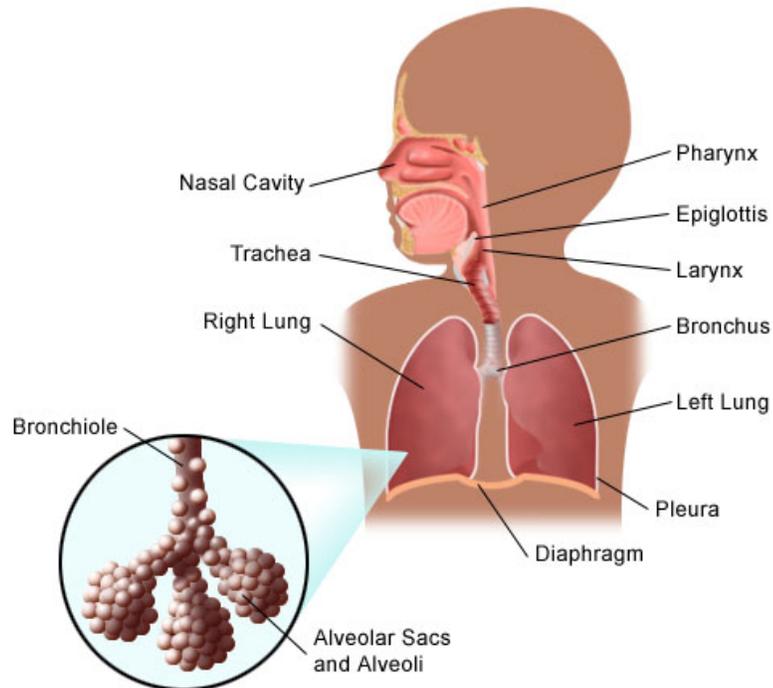


Bronchiolitis



What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is a viral infection of the lungs that usually affects infants. There is swelling in the smaller airways or bronchioles of the lung, which causes coughing and wheezing. Bronchiolitis is the most common reason for children under 1 year old to be admitted to the hospital.

What are the symptoms of bronchiolitis?

The following are the most common symptoms of bronchiolitis. However, each child may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

- Runny nose or nasal congestion
- Fever
- Cough
- Changes in breathing patterns (wheezing and breathing faster or harder are common)
- Decreased appetite
- Fussiness
- Vomiting

What causes bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is a common illness caused by different viruses. The most common virus causing this infection is Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). However, many other viruses can cause bronchiolitis including: Influenza, Parainfluenza, Rhinovirus, Adenovirus, and Human metapneumovirus.

Initially, the virus causes an infection in the upper airways, and then spreads downward into the lower airways of the lungs. The virus causes swelling of the airways. Mucus is also produced in the airways. This narrowing of the airways can make it difficult for your child to breath, eat, or nurse.

How is bronchiolitis diagnosed?

Bronchiolitis is usually diagnosed on the history and physical examination of the child.

Antibiotics are not helpful in treating viruses and are not needed to treat bronchiolitis. Because there is no cure for the disease, the goal of treatment is to make your child comfortable and to support their symptoms. This treatment may include suctioning to keep the airways clear, extra oxygen if the blood oxygen levels are low, or hydration if your child is not able to feed well.

Children with bronchiolitis have wheezing, which the same sound is made by children with asthma; however, bronchiolitis is not asthma and does not respond to the same medications. This is why asthma medications such as albuterol and steroids are not routinely used in bronchiolitis.

Bronchiolitis often lasts for two weeks and there is no treatment which can shorten the duration of cough. Cough medicines generally do not work or are not safe for children. Your child should get better slowly on his or her own, but there is a small chance of worsening.

If your child's physician feels your child is stable enough to be treated at home, the following treatment is recommended:

- Encourage your child to drink plenty of liquids each day
- Frequent suctioning (with a nasal bulb suction) of your child's nose and mouth to help get rid of thick secretions.
- Elevation of the child's head while sleeping. Do not use pillows for infants less than 12 months of age.