

Wheezing & breathing difficulties

Look at the signs

Any kind of breathing difficulty your infant or child experiences can be scary for parents. It is often nothing to worry about and illnesses like bronchiolitis, mild croup and a cough can often be treated at home.

Use your instincts with newborns and babies:

- Rapid breathing or panting is common. If there is no other sign of illness, it comes and goes and your baby is breathing comfortably most of the time, there's normally no need to worry.
- Breathing may sound a bit rattly. Try holding your baby upright.
- Occasional coughing or choking may occur when a baby takes in milk too quickly with feeds. Try to slow things down a bit. Check feeding position.
- A cold or mild cough. Keep an eye on them at this stage and use your instincts. If you are worried talk to your health visitor.

In older babies and toddlers you may notice:

- Coughing, runny nose, mild temperature.
- Croup (hoarse voice, barking cough) needs to be assessed by your GP and may need treating with steroids.
- Child appears pale.
- Wheezing is fairly common in the under 5s associated with colds. It is not usually suggestive of asthma unless symptoms occur between viral infections.

GP's tips

Get help and contact your GP now if your child:

- Seems to find breathing hard work and they are sucking in their ribs and tummy.
- They can't complete a full sentence without stopping to take a breath.

Get help and call 999 or take them to A&E now if:

- Their chest looks like it is 'caving in.'
- They appear pale or even slightly blue-ish.

Bronchiolitis

Bronchiolitis is a common respiratory tract infection that affects babies and young children under a year old. The early symptoms are similar to those of a common cold and include a runny nose and cough.

As it develops, the symptoms of bronchiolitis can include: A persistent cough, noisy breathing and difficulty feeding.

Symptoms usually improve after three days and in most cases the illness isn't serious. However, contact your GP or health visitor if your child is only able to feed half the normal amount or is struggling to breathe, or if you are generally worried about them.

Source: www.nhs.uk/conditions/bronchiolitis

Croup

Croup causes a distinctive barking cough with a harsh sound, when the child breathes in.

Comforting your child is important as symptoms may worsen if they are agitated or crying. Mild cases of croup can be managed at home. If your child has a fever and is distressed, paracetamol can be given from the age of three months and will ease discomfort.

If symptoms get worse contact your GP.

Smokefree

Call 0300 123 1044 or visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree