

COUGHS AND NOISY BREATHING IN YOUNG BABIES

Advice from **THE LITTLE ORANGE BOOK**



Young babies often catch lots of coughs and colds, and their breathing can become noisy. Often, these illnesses can be managed with self-care at home.

The babies most likely to need hospital care are those under 3 months of age, those born prematurely (less than 32 weeks), and children with cystic fibrosis, heart or muscle problems such as cerebral palsy. Please follow the advice below and in **the Little Orange Book**:

When to care for your baby at home

SELF CARE **OFF NURSERY OR SCHOOL?** **Y** **N**

- Occasional snorts and grunts in young babies are completely normal and nothing to worry about.
- Many young babies in their first 2 - 3 months can have short episodes where they breathe faster and deeper, then more slowly and less deeply. They can pause and not take a breath for 5 to 10 seconds before starting with the deeper breaths again. This comes and goes, and if the baby is their usual colour and feeding well, it's normal.
- If you're unsure or the problem doesn't go away, call your GP or health visitor.



Impact of smoking

Children who breathe cigarette smoke are more at risk of:
Coughs, colds and ear infections
Asthma and asthma attacks
Serious chest infections
Cot death (Sudden Infant Death /SIDS)- Risk doubled
Meningitis

Call 0800 022 4332 for help to quit or visit [SMOKEFREE's website](#).

TOP TIP

When you may need to call the GP

CONTACT YOUR GP if the problem doesn't settle **7-10 DAYS** **USUAL LENGTH OF ILLNESS** **OFF NURSERY OR SCHOOL?** **Y** **N** (unless too ill to attend)

- Bronchiolitis is a viral infection that affects babies and children up to age 2 years, usually in winter. 1 in 3 babies have had it by their first birthday.
- It starts with the symptoms of a cold and a 'musical' sounding cough.
- After 2-3 days, the lungs also make mucus so your baby will sound 'like a coffee machine' because their chest is full of funny rattles and wheezes which make it harder for them to feed.
- If your child is unhappy with the cough and has a fever, paracetamol or ibuprofen can be given. Most bronchiolitis is MILD and your baby's breathing and reduced feeding will be much better after 5 days. Your baby may still sound 'like a coffee machine' for 3 more weeks but they will usually be happy and feeding well.
- Exposure to cigarette smoke, indoors or outdoors, can make bronchiolitis worse.

When to seek urgent help from 111

CONTACT YOUR GP **CALL 111**

- Pauses in breathing that last longer than 10 seconds, and changes in colour with or without reduced feeding can be a sign of bronchiolitis or other serious illness in babies less than 3 months old. They need to be seen by a doctor within 2 hours. **Call 111.**



TOP TIPS

When your baby is tired and struggling to feed because of their breathing, feeding for a shorter period of time but more frequently can help them to get enough milk.

TOP TIP

Stop passing them on!
Germs spread easily. Follow these 3 easy steps to stop passing them on.



Catch it
Use tissues to catch coughs and sneezes



Bin it
Get rid of the tissues straight away



Kill it
Wash away the germs with soap and water

When to call 999

CALL 999

If your child

- is struggling to breathe and breathing more than 60 breaths per minute at any age under 5 years (1 breath every second)
- has croup, and cannot breathe lying down and/or if the stridor noise is there even when your child is calm
- is grunting (an 'effort' noise with every breath in)
- has caving in of their chest with every breath
- has pauses in breathing lasting longer than 10 seconds, especially if under 3 months of age
- looks very pale and lips are blue or your child is floppy and exhausted/difficult to wake up
- is under 3 months of age and has a temperature over 38°C
- has a rash that doesn't fade with pressure

UNSURE WHICH SERVICE TO USE?



GP practices are open and are offering face to face appointments. Call your GP practice between 8am - 6pm weekdays. After 6pm or during the weekend call NHS111.

CALL 111

111 is the urgent health advice line that can be contacted 24 hours a day, including overnight and at weekend (and it's free even from a mobile).

A&E is for life threatening emergencies only.