



Source CIUSSS MCQ

Bronchiolitis in babies or children

Bronchiolitis is an infection of the small bronchial tubes called bronchioles. It is caused by a virus, most often the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). It most often affects children under 2 years of age and especially children under 1 year of age.

The virus that causes bronchiolitis is very common and contagious. It is mostly active between November and April. It is transmitted through saliva, sneezing, coughing, soiled equipment and hands.

Possible symptoms

- Symptoms of the common cold, i.e., nasal congestion and runny nose, sore throat, fatigue, chills (first symptoms);
- Fever over 38.5 °C (101.3 °F);
Rectal temperature taking (rectum) remains the most reliable.
- Difficulty breathing or respiratory discomfort;
- Noisy breathing;
- Difficulty eating;
- Nostril flapping in babies;
- Pulling: skin that sinks into the chest, sternum, above, between and below the ribs or at the collarbones when the child breathes.

Typically, symptoms may worsen up to 5 days after the first symptoms appear and then gradually improve over a period of 2 to 3 weeks.

How to prevent bronchiolitis?

- Have your child vaccinated according to the vaccination schedule.
- Wash their hands frequently or encourage them to wash their hands after blowing their nose or touching their face and before eating or drinking, and when they return home.
- Make your child's environment smoke-free.
- Avoid contact with people who have a respiratory infection, such as the common cold or flu.
- Avoid sharing toys that may have been handled by people who are ill.
- Avoid going to crowded places.

How to care for your child?

- Clear your child's nose (nasal hygiene) as often as possible, especially before meals, before breastfeeding or before bedtime. See CIUSSS MCQ Sheet *Nasal hygiene in infants and children*.
- Keep the head of your child's bed at an angle of at least 30°. Use cushions or pillows **under your child's mattress** to raise it.
- Use the semi-seated position (head elevated at an angle of 30°) when feeding.
- Give your child frequent or smaller amounts of fluids to help them stay hydrated.
- Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fever and pain. You can give acetaminophen to your child if he or she is older than 3 months. Follow the dosage, amount and dosing interval recommended on the product label, based on your child's weight. If you are unsure, consult your pharmacist or dial 811 for Info-Santé.

Caution!

Avoid:

- giving ibuprofen to your child if they are under 6 months old or have trouble staying hydrated.
- giving cough medicines if your child is under 6 years old.
- decongestants and antihistamines that are not considered effective in treating respiratory tract infections.

When to consult?

- If your child's symptoms have persisted for at least 14 days without improvement.
- If your child is over 3 months old and has a fever.

- If your child refuses to eat and drink.

When to go to the ER URGENTLY?

If your child:

- is less than 1 month old.
- is less than 3 months old and has a fever of more than 38 °C rectal (100.4 °F).
- has trouble breathing: very fast or difficult breathing.
- is pale, has less colour or has bluish lips or fingertips
- shows signs of dehydration, i.e., decreased amount and frequency of urination (less than 3 to 4 per 24-hour period), lack of tears or dry mouth.
- shows unusual behaviour, such as excessive crying, amorphous state, difficulty waking up, irritability, agitation, etc.)



For more information

- [Explanatory sheets and videos: ciusssmq.ca/conseils-sante/vous-etes-malade/](https://ciusssmq.ca/conseils-sante/vous-etes-malade/)
- [Bronchiolitis: sheet from the Centre hospitalier universitaire Sainte-Justine](#)

Contact information for medical clinics

- [CIUSSS MCQ website: facility contact information](#)

Where to consult

- Your pharmacist
- Info-Santé 811 available at all times: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Your family doctor at your FMG or medical clinic
- If you do not have a physician: 1-844-313-2029, option 1. From 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday to Friday and from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and holidays
- Walk-in clinics

OU-22-455
2021-11

*Please note that the above content does not replace
professional medical advice.*

Centre intégré
universitaire de santé
et de services sociaux
de la Mauricie-et-
du-Centre-du-Québec

Québec 

www.ciusssmq.ca