What is Bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is an infection that affects a part of the lungs called the bronchioles. The bronchioles are the small, branching tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs. When infected, they get swollen and full of mucus. Bronchiolitis is caused by viruses that spread easily from person to person. These viruses live in the droplets that go into the air when a sick person coughs or sneezes.

What are the symptoms of Bronchiolitis?

• A stuffy or runny nose
• A mild cough
• A fever (temperature higher than 100.4°F or 38°C)
• A decreased appetite

As bronchiolitis progresses, other symptoms can start, including:
• Breathing fast or having trouble breathing
• Wheezing, or a whistling sound when breathing (which usually lasts about 7 days)
• A severe cough (which can last for 14 days or longer)
• Trouble eating and drinking

What can I do on my own to help my child feel better?

• Make sure your child gets enough fluids. Call the doctor or nurse if your baby has fewer wet diapers than normal.
• Use a humidifier in your child’s bedroom.
• If your child is uncomfortable because of fever, you can treat the fever with over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen (sample brand name: Tylenol) or ibuprofen (sample brand names: Advil, Motrin). Never give aspirin to a child younger than 18 years old.
• Suction the mucus from your child’s nose with a suction bulb.
• Sleep in the same room as your child, so you know immediately if he or she starts having trouble breathing.
• Do not allow anyone to smoke near your child.

How can Bronchiolitis be treated and prevented?

The main treatments for bronchiolitis are aimed at making sure that your child is getting enough oxygen. To do that, the doctor or nurse might need to suction the mucus from your child’s nose, or give your child moist air or oxygen to breathe. The doctor will probably not offer antibiotics, because bronchiolitis is caused by viruses, and antibiotics do not work on viruses. Washing your hands and your child’s hands often with soap and water, using alcohol hand rubs, or staying away from other adults and children that are sick.

RSV → Bronchiolitis

As cooler temperatures approach, we can expect more cough and cold symptoms. One common virus causing cough in young children is RSV.