



## Information Sheets for Parents – *Health Fact Sheet*

# ***Bronchiolitis***

### **National Quality Standard – Quality Area 2**

Element 2.1.2 – Health Practices and Procedures – Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.

#### **Description:**

Bronchiolitis is a potentially serious chest infection caused by a virus. The virus infects the small breathing tubes (bronchioles) of the lungs, causing inflammation, mucus production and breathing difficulties. Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is usually responsible for bronchiolitis, although other viruses may cause outbreaks.

The symptoms of the infection begin like a common cold, with a runny nose, cough and fever. The coughing may become worse over the next day or two, and rapid breathing and wheezing can make feeding the child difficult. Wheezing when breathing out is characteristic of bronchiolitis—seek medical advice if the child develops these symptoms. The wheezing sound can last for 2–3 days, but the cough can last up to a month.

#### **How does it spread?**

The disease spreads by mouth-to-mouth contact and airborne droplets. It can also spread indirectly by contact with surfaces that have been contaminated by infectious airborne droplets (e.g. hands, tissues, toys, eating utensils).

#### **Incubation period:**

The incubation period for RSV is usually 5 days, but can range from 2 to 8 days.

#### **Infectious period:**

People are infectious just before symptoms begin and during the active stage of the disease—this is usually 1 week in total.

#### **Exclusion period:**

A child with bronchiolitis should stay at home until they are feeling well. If a child has been diagnosed with RSV (testing results are provided when COVID tested) It is recommended that they remain away from the service for a period of 10 days.

**Responsibilities of parents:**

- Keep the child at home until they are feeling well.
- Encourage cough and sneeze etiquette and effective hand hygiene at home.
- Avoid contact between your child and other children, or frail and elderly people, until the child is feeling well. Controlling the spread of infection
- Teach children about cough and sneeze etiquette. – Cough or sneeze into your inner elbow rather than your hand. – If you used a tissue to cover your nose or mouth when sneezing or coughing, put the tissue in the bin straight away. – Clean your hands.
- Ensure that staff practise cough and sneeze etiquette and hand hygiene.
- Avoid contact between the person who is ill and children, or frail and elderly people, until the person is feeling well.

**Treatment:**

Bronchiolitis is a viral infection, which means that antibiotics will not help the child get better. A child with severe bronchiolitis will need to see a doctor. Some children with bronchiolitis may need to go to hospital for a short time to have specialised medical treatment.

People with mild bronchiolitis may be treated at home, and may benefit from a warm, humid atmosphere (a humidifier or steam). Fluid intake should be increased. Paracetamol and decongestant medication may help relieve a sore throat and other symptoms.

For further information: [Staying Healthy in Child Care](#)