

# Wheezing and breathing difficulties

## Look at the signs

Any kind of breathing difficulty your infant or child experiences can be scary for parents. A cough can often be treated at home, if you are worried contact your GP.

### 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 - (see coughs, colds and flu).
- Croup (hoarse voice, barking cough) needs to be assessed by your GP.
- 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 or call 111 **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.

## 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. 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 or you think your child may have croup contact your GP or call 111.

## 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 if your child is only able to feed half the normal amount, or seems short of breath, or if you are generally worried about them.

Source: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/Bronchiolitis/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Bronchiolitis/)

Wheezing and breathing difficulties are more common in children who are around smoke. Make sure your home and car are smokefree.

Smokefree **0300 123 1044** or visit [www.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree)