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Health Issues

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Treating Bronchiolitis in Infants

My child has bronchiolitis. How is that treated?

There is no specific treatment for bronchiolitis. Antibiotics are not helpful because they treat illnesses caused by bacteria, not viruses. However, you can try to ease your child's symptoms.

To relieve a stuffy nose

- Thin the mucus using saline nose drops recommended by your pediatrician. Never use nonprescription nose drops that contain any medicine.
- Clear your baby's nose with a suction bulb. Squeeze the bulb first. Gently put the rubber tip into one nostril, and slowly release the bulb. This suction will draw the clogged mucus out of the nose. This works best when your baby is younger than 6 months.

To relieve fever

- Give your baby acetaminophen. (Follow the recommended dosage for your child's age.) Do not give your baby aspirin because it has been associated with Reye syndrome, a disease that affects the liver and brain. Check with your pediatrician first before giving any other cold medicines.

To prevent dehydration

- Make sure your baby drinks lots of fluid. She may want clear liquids rather than milk or formula. She may feed more slowly or not feel like eating because she is having trouble breathing.

Call your pediatrician if your baby is having mild to moderate trouble breathing. Your pediatrician may try using a drug that opens up the breathing tubes. This may help some infants.

Some children with bronchiolitis need to be treated in a hospital for breathing problems or dehydration. Breathing problems may need to be treated with oxygen and medicine. Dehydration is treated with a special liquid diet or intravenous (IV) fluids.

In very rare cases when these treatments aren't working, an infant might have to be put on a respirator. This usually is only temporary until the infection is gone.

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Source Bronchiolitis and Your Young Child (Copyright © 2006 American Academy of Pediatrics)

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