



Find out more from the National Paediatric Lead

# All Wales Guideline for Ambulance Service Management of Bronchiolitis

## Diagnosis

- Age <1 year
- A coryzal prodrome lasting 1 to 3 days
- Persistent cough
- Tachypnoea and/or chest recessions
- Crackles and/or wheeze

## Season 2021/22

- Children age 1-2 years may also contract RSV bronchiolitis and should be managed similarly to infants
- COVID infection is unlikely to cause severe disease in children
- IPC precautions apply to all patients with respiratory infection

## Mild

- Oxygen sats >92%
- Mild respiratory distress
- Feeds >75% normal
- Wet nappies

## Moderate

- Oxygen sats >92%
- Moderate respiratory distress
- Feeds 50-75% normal
- Decreased wet nappies

## Severe

- Oxygen sats ≤92%
- Severe respiratory distress
- Feeds <50% normal
- Lethargic and tiring
- Apnoeas

**Apnoeas** may be the only clinical sign of bronchiolitis in young infants. Always consider alternative diagnoses.

**If Oxygen sats <94%**  
Ambulance policy is for transfer to hospital for assessment

**If Oxygen sats >94%**  
Use clinical judgement  
Consider hospital review

- Early stages of illness (D1-3)
- Risk factors for severe disease
- Difficult social circumstances
- Low skills/ confidence in carer
- <4 weeks of age

**Discuss with Primary Care**  
Can child stay at home?

- Explain diagnosis
- Refer to patient advice sheet
- Explain expected time course for disease
- Discuss red flags suggesting deterioration
- Address parental smoking
- Think "safeguarding"
- Consider follow-up to monitor disease progress in 24-48 hours

Patient advice leaflet



## Alternative Diagnosis

**High Fever (>39 °C, or >38 °C in age <3/12)**

**Poor capillary refill**

Think bacterial infection:

- Pneumonia
- Sepsis
- Meningitis

**Review**

NICE NG143 Guideline: Fever in under 5s

Traffic light system for serious illness

## Risk factors for severe disease

- Congenital heart disease
- Chronic lung disease
- Preterm (born <32 weeks gestation)
- Neuromuscular disorder
- Immunodeficiency

**Low threshold for admission and individualised management plan**

## Respiratory distress

### Mild

- Minimal chest recessions
- Tachypnoea  
<50 breaths/min age <1yrs  
<40 breaths/min age 1-2 yrs

### Moderate

- Moderate chest recession
- Nasal flare
- Tachypnoea  
>50 breaths/min age <1yrs  
>40 breaths/min age 1-2 yrs

### Severe

- Severe chest recession
- Expiratory grunting
- Use of accessory muscles
- Tachypnoea  
>60 breaths/min

## Evidence-based medicine

**Bronchiolitis does not respond to:**

- Hypertonic saline
- Bronchodilators
- Anticholinergics
- Inhaled steroids
- Oral steroids