Bronchiolitis

Bronchiolitis is an infection of the breathing tract. The infection is usually caused by a virus, such as respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). It cannot be cured with antibiotics. The virus must run its course and can last as long as six weeks.

Symptoms of bronchiolitis include:

- Rapid heavy breathing
- Wheezing (tight breathing)
- Fever
- Cough (which can occasionally cause vomiting)
- Lots of mucus from the nose and mouth

Things to do at home:

- You can give acetaminophen (Tylenol®) every 4 to 6 hours for fever greater than 101° F (38.3° C). Check the package for the amount to give based on your child’s weight and age. **DO NOT** give more than five doses in 24 hours.
- Bulb suction your infant’s nose before feeding and before putting him down to sleep. This helps clear the mucus from the airway and makes breathing easier. (See Using a Bulb Syringe Care Card)
- **DO NOT** let anyone smoke around your child or in your home. Smoke can make the wheezing and coughing worse.
- Good hand washing can help decrease the spread of viruses causing bronchiolitis.
- Viruses causing bronchiolitis are contagious. Germs can live on objects, like toys, for 2 or 3 hours or longer. It is a good idea not to share toys. Clean your child’s toys often with soap and water.
- Encourage your child to rest often. He may not eat as much as usual because he is sick and tires easily.
- Elevate the head of the bed to help with drainage of mucus.
- Encourage your child to drink fluids in small amounts. Give liquids often and at room temperature to relax his throat and lessen his cough.
- A cool mist vaporizer or humidifier can help your child breathe easier. Change the water every day. Clean the machine per the manufacturer recommendations.
Call your child’s doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:

- Your child’s breathing changes (gets faster or more noisy)
- Your child’s wheezing increases with retractions (skin tugs in between the ribs).
- Your child has a fever and is less than 6 months old.
- Your child has a fever of 103° F (39.5° C) or greater for two days. (See "Fever" CARE CARD.)
- Your child won’t eat, drink or take a bottle.
- Your child does not have a wet diaper or does not go to the bathroom in 12 hours.
- Your child is pulling at his ear(s) or complains of an earache.
- The color of your child’s lips, skin and /or fingernails changes (pale or blue).
- You have questions or concerns that your child is getting sicker.

Call 911 if your child stops breathing.