



## Discharge Information – Wheeze/Bronchiolitis

### What causes wheeze in children?

In younger children, most wheezy episodes are caused by viral illnesses. The most common one is called Bronchiolitis.

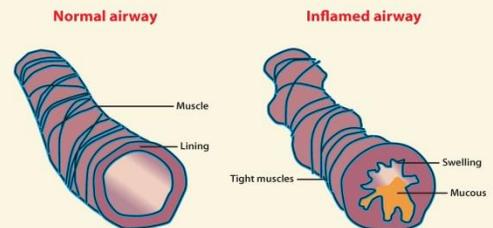
**Wheezing is a musical, whistling sound with breathing, usually as you breathe out.  
It comes from the chest – not the nose or throat.**

During a wheezy episode the smaller airways of the lungs become narrowed. This can be due to:

- swelling of the airway wall
- an increase in mucous in the airway
- tightening of the muscles in the airway wall

**This causes wheezing and difficulty with breathing.**

**Bronchiolitis** usually starts with a runny nose and a cough with wheeze following. This can make it difficult for your child to breathe which affects sleeping, eating and drinking.



### How long does Bronchiolitis last?

The wheezing and difficulty breathing lasts for several days and then gradually improves. The cough usually lasts 10-14 days but may last as long as a month. So after discharge from hospital, do not worry if the cough continues for that long.

### How can it be treated?

Because bronchiolitis is caused by a virus, there is no medicine that will “cure” it. **Antibiotics do not help.**

Paracetamol can be given to help reduce a fever and/or to keep your child comfortable.

Young children with bronchiolitis often get tired while feeding. If your child is getting tired or taking shorter feeds, try offering smaller feeds more often.

If your child is under 1 year of age some saline (salt water) nose drops may help to help clear mucous from the nose. Give 0.2mls up each nostril as needed and 10 minutes before a bottle/feed is due.

**Bronchiolitis spreads very easily. Keep your child away from other children during the first week of the illness (e.g. your child should not attend day care). The virus is spread from person to person by coughing and by contact with secretions from the nose.**

## What can I do to help my child recover?

- While your child is wheezy it is normal for them to want to eat less food but make sure they drink plenty of fluids.
- Offer smaller feeds more often.
- Do not allow people to smoke in your home or near your child.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Keep your child resting at home until their wheeze is better

## When to go to your family doctor?

We expect your child to get better over the next few days (it may take a week or more until they are completely better) but if they are getting worse you should take them to see your family doctor. Especially if they:

- Are drinking less than half what they would drink normally
- Have less than 2 wet nappies per day.
- Develop new symptoms such as vomiting, rash, high fevers, or you are still worried about them.

## When to bring your child back to the ED?

If your child is:

- Breathing very fast
- Very short of breath
- Sucking in between their ribs with each breath
- Having fewer wet nappies than normal (less than half)
- **Or if you are worried about them**

## Danger Signs – When to call an ambulance?

If your child is:

- Too breathless to drink
- Looking like they are too tired to breathe
- Very pale or has a slight blue colour to the lips or gums
- So breathless that they are distressed and you cannot calm them down



**Dial 111 for an ambulance**

## Discharge Checklist.

Before you take your child home we will check that you feel confident to manage at home and you know:

- What to expect over the next few days
- Who to contact if you are concerned
- When to go and see your family doctor
- What follow up your child needs
- When to bring your child back to the emergency department
- The **danger signs**.
- The plan for managing future wheezy episodes

## Where to get advice or information?

- Your family doctor
- After hours medical service
- <http://www.kidshealth.org.nz/>
- Healthline: 0800 611 116
- North Shore Hospital ECC: 486 1491,
- Waitakere Hospital ED: 839 0000

