



Bronchitis in Teens

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Your child's doctor or a member of your child's health care team will talk with you about specific care for your child.

What is bronchitis?

Bronchitis is an inflammation of the large airways in the lungs. It usually happens with a cold. Bronchitis is usually not found in babies and young children.

A virus usually causes bronchitis. This means that antibiotics will not usually help treat it. Antibiotics kill bacteria and not viruses. Washing your hands well can help stop the infection from spreading.

What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Cold-like symptoms
- A dry, hacking cough with no mucus. This is called a non-productive cough, and it may be worse at night. The cough may become productive (with mucus) in two to three days.
- Fever (temperature over 100.3°F)
- Not feeling hungry
- Tiredness

How is bronchitis treated?

Most children improve quickly over a few days. However, the cough may last for a week or longer. Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some general guidelines to follow include:

- Give antibiotics if they are ordered by your child's doctor. Give them for as long as your child's doctor prescribes them, even if your child feels better.
- Use cough medicine or expectorants only if prescribed by your child's doctor.
 - Coughing helps clear mucus from the chest and lungs.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol or less costly store brand) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or less costly store brand) may be given for fever. Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your doctor how much medicine to give.
 - **DO NOT** give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
 - **DO NOT** use acetaminophen and ibuprofen together. **DO NOT** alternate.
- Give your child plenty of clear fluids such as Gatorade, flat, non-carbonated drinks and water. Do not force your child to eat solid foods.
- Help your child get plenty of rest.
- Place a cool mist humidifier by your child's room.
 - Hot steam vaporizers are not safe. They can cause burns.
 - Change the water and clean the humidifier each day.
 - Follow the cleaning instructions that came with the machine, so it doesn't grow germs and mold.
- Avoid cigarette smoke and odor around your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Bronchitis in Teens, continued

When should I call the doctor?

Call 911 or your local ambulance service right away if your child:

- Is so tired and weak that he hardly responds to you.
- Is working **very** hard to breathe or finds it hard to take a breath.
- Grunts when he breathes.
- Has chest retractions (skin pulling in around the ribs and chest when breathing).
- Has a blue or dark purple color to the nail beds, lips or gums.
- Stops breathing for more than 10 seconds.
- Cannot speak while trying to breathe.
- Has any breathing problem that needs care **right away**.

Call your child's doctor right away if your child:

- Does not show interest in play such as TV, games or the computer for at least a few minutes during a four-hour period
- Wheezes or breathes harder than he did when he was seen by the doctor.
- Has a tight feeling in the chest.
- Is not better or has a feeling of tiredness and weakness after three days.
- Has a new fever since being seen by the doctor (temperature over 100.3°F).
- Has a fever that lasts longer than two or three days.

Call the doctor if you see:

- Bloody saliva, phlegm or mucus.
- You have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.