Cough/cold in children under 1 year of age - Advice Sheet

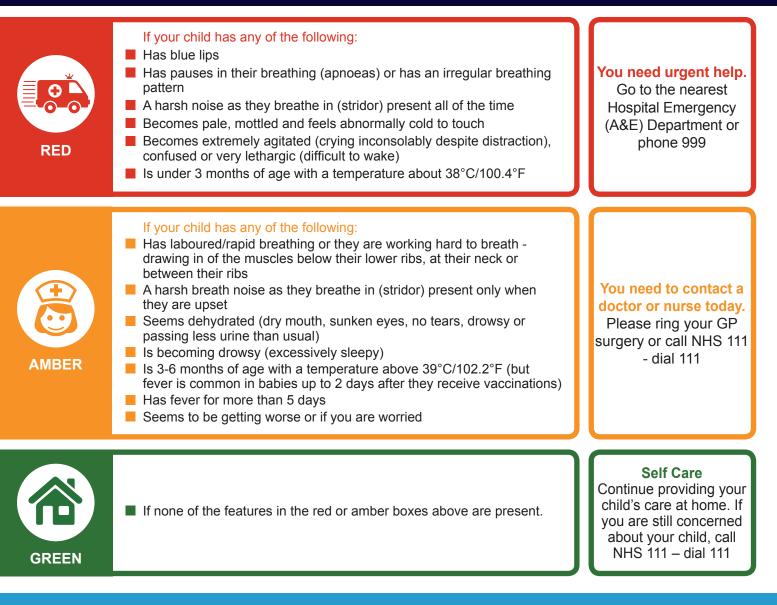




Advice for parents and carers after contact with NHS 111

Coughs and colds are extremely common in young children and tend to occur more frequently over the autumn and winter months. They are usually caused by infection and most children get better by themselves. In general, antibiotics do not make them better more quickly. If they are finding it hard to breathe or are too breathless to feed, they may need to be looked after in hospital.

When should you worry?



Treatment

Most children with coughs/colds do not require treatment with antibiotics. Antibiotics rarely speed up recovery and often cause side effects such as rash and diarrhoea. They will also promote the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria in your child.

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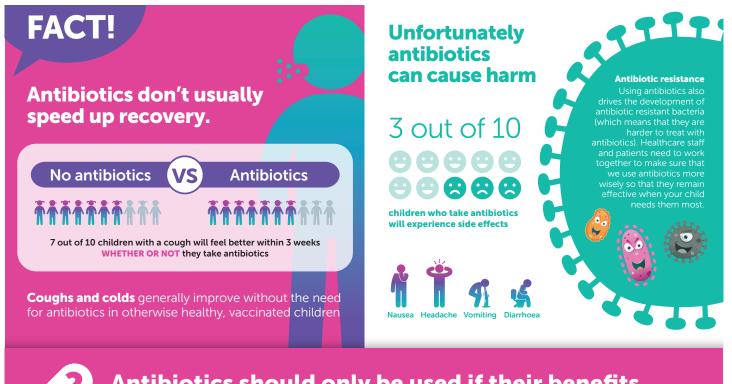
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Treatment continued



Antibiotics should only be used if their benefits are likely to outweigh their harms

- Keep your child well hydrated by offering them lots of fluids. If your child is not feeding as normal, offer smaller feeds but more frequently
- Cough syrup does not tend to help with coughs
- You can try using saline nose drops or spray if your baby has a blocked nose

If your child has a runny nose and breathing difficulties, it is most likely that they have a condition called bronchiolitis. Most children with bronchiolitis get better by themselves with no specific treatment. Bronchiolitis is caused by a viral illness, so antibiotics are not helpful.

Symptoms of bronchiolitis

- Your child may have a runny nose and sometimes a temperature and a cough
- After a few days your child's cough may become worse and their breathing may get faster / more laboured
- As breathing becomes more difficult, your baby may not be able to take their usual amount of milk by breast or bottle
- Your child may vomit after feeding and you may notice fewer nappies than normal.

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How long does bronchiolitis last?

- Most children with bronchiolitis will seem to worsen during the first 1-3 days of the illness before beginning to improve over the next two weeks. The cough may go on for a few more weeks
- Your child can go back to nursery or day care as soon as he or she is well enough (that is feeding normally and with no difficulty in breathing).

Prevention

It is not always easy to avoid catching these infections. However, good hygiene practices can prevent infections spreading.

- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly
- Use a tissue when coughing or sneezing and put it in the bin
- Avoid sharing glasses or utensils with people who are unwell.