

Bringing Home Your Baby

Congratulations! The moment you've been waiting for is finally here! Bringing your baby home can be both exciting and scary at the same time.

Because babies' immune systems are not fully developed, they are more at risk for germs and infections than older children or adults.

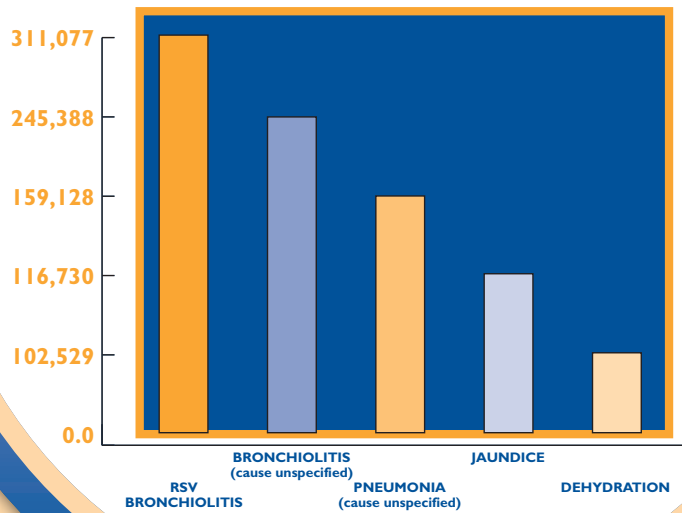
Helping To Protect Your Baby

Your baby has been cleared for discharge from the hospital. Follow your doctor's or nurse's instructions and visit your pediatrician or clinic for regular evaluation, medical care and immunizations.



Top 5 Reasons Babies Are Hospitalized*

(Babies are defined as 1 year old or younger)



*Leader S, Kohlhase KF. J Peds. 143[5]:S127-S132 2003.

The good news is that there is a lot that can be done to prevent the hospitalization of your baby!

Please see below for prevention tips and symptoms to be aware of.

RSV

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) (*RESS-per-uh-tawr-ee sin-SYSH-ul VAHY-ruhs*) is a common virus that usually occurs in the fall and runs through the spring, but the timing can be different in various parts of the country. While this virus generally causes mild, cold-like symptoms in adults, kids, and most babies, it can cause serious respiratory infections, such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia in babies born early (less than 36 weeks).

Symptoms in your baby may include:

- Troubled or rapid breathing
- Fever greater than 100.4°F
- Gasping for breath
- Coughing or wheezing
- Flared (spread out) nostrils and/or caved-in chest when trying to breathe
- Bluish lips or fingertips

Prevention: There are some simple ways to help prevent RSV infection in babies.

- Wash your hands before touching your child and make sure others wash their hands, too.
- Clean your baby's toys, clothes, bedding, crib rails and any other surfaces he or she might touch.
- Avoid exposing your baby to crowds.
- Keep your baby away from anyone with a cold or fever.
- Try to keep young children away from your baby. RSV is very common among young children and easily spreads from child to child.
- Do not smoke anywhere near your baby. Exposure to tobacco smoke increases the risk of RSV illness.

For babies born early (less than 36 weeks), speak to your healthcare provider about specific medical options available to help prevent RSV.

JAUNDICE

Jaundice (*JAWN-diss*) is a yellow color in the skin, the mucous membranes, or the eyes due to an excess of bilirubin. Bilirubin is a by-product of old red blood cells that may have accumulated due to overload in clearing waste from the liver, or digestive system. Though some jaundice is common in the first week of life, extreme or ongoing jaundice may be a sign of toxic build-up of bilirubin.

Due to the immature nature of all of their body systems, premature babies are at greater risk for complications.

Prevention:

- Feed babies often and do not let them become dehydrated.
- Watch for discoloration, such as yellow to orange tones that continue or become more extreme. Seek advice from your healthcare professional if you have concerns.

BRONCHIOLITIS

Bronchiolitis (*brong-kee-oh-LI-tis*) is an inflammation of the small passages in the lungs usually caused by a viral infection. It begins as a mild cold, but over a period of 2 to 3 days, may develop into a serious lung infection.

Symptoms in your baby may include:

- Bluish color, due to lack of oxygen
- A "tight" wheezy cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing
- Increased breathing rate with flared nostrils and/or caved-in chest
- Fever

Prevention: Bronchiolitis is not easy to prevent because the viruses that cause it (RSV is one of them) are common in our environment. However, careful attention to hand washing around infants can help prevent the viruses that cause bronchiolitis.

PNEUMONIA

Pneumonia (*noo-MOHN-yuh*) is an infection of the lungs. Many different things cause it, including bacteria and viruses like RSV and influenza. Pneumonia can range from mild to severe and can even be deadly.

Symptoms in your baby may include:

- Cough with greenish, yellow, or bloody mucus
- Fever with shaking chills
- Rapid, shallow breathing, or shortness of breath
- Exhaustion

Prevention:

- Wash your hands frequently, especially after blowing your nose, before you touch your baby.
- Vaccines can help prevent pneumonia in children. Speak to your doctor about what is right for your baby.

DEHYDRATION

Dehydration (*dee-hahy-DREY-shuhn*) means your baby's body does not contain as many fluids as it should. Dehydration is most commonly caused by ongoing vomiting and diarrhea. Infants and children are more vulnerable to dehydration than adults due to their smaller body weight and because they process water and electrolytes more quickly than larger people do.

Symptoms in your baby may include:

- Low or no urine output; urine appears dark yellow
- Not producing tears
- Sunken/hollow eyes
- Dry skin
- Markedly sunken fontanelles (the soft spot on the top of an infant's head)

Prevention:

- Pay close attention when your baby is vomiting or has diarrhea and offer fluids — DO NOT wait for signs of dehydration.

This information is intended to be a guideline to explain some of the reasons and warning signs that your baby may need to be rehospitalized. Please be sure to call your healthcare provider or visit your clinic if you notice any of the symptoms above.