

# Keeping your premature baby well after going home

## A Guide to Chest Infections



### 1 Why can infections matter more after premature birth?



Babies born early have developing lungs and immune systems.

Bronchiolitis is a viral infection of the small airways.

### 3 Protection against RSV



RSV vaccination is offered from 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Babies born before 32 weeks, or with eligible heart, lung or immune conditions, should also be offered long-acting RSV antibody protection - even if their mother was vaccinated.

Ask your neonatal team if protection has been given or arranged for the first RSV season.

RSV protection reduces severe RSV disease but does not prevent every respiratory infection.

### 4 If your baby has a cough or cold



Offer usual milk in smaller, more frequent feeds.

Check breathing, feeding, alertness and wet nappies, including overnight.

For every sleep: on their back, on a firm, flat mattress in a clear cot. No toys, pillows, wedges or loose bedding; keep their head uncovered. **Do not share a bed** with a premature baby.

Follow your baby's discharge plan for oxygen, medicines and feeding.

#### Temperature: get medical assessment now

Go to A&E now: under 3 months with temperature **38°C or higher**; age 3–6 months with **39°C or higher**; or temperature **below 36°C** at any age.

If **below 36°C** and otherwise well, recheck twice within 10 minutes. Do not delay help if unwell. Call 999 for any red sign.

### 6 Where to get help



#### Call 999 for any red sign.

NHS 111 for urgent advice.

Your GP. Your neonatal or community neonatal team.

### 2 Reduce the risk of infection



Wash hands before touching your baby.



Ask unwell visitors to wait until better. Avoid kissing baby's face or hands.



Keep your baby's home and car smoke-free.



Keep routine immunisations up to date.



Breast milk, where possible, provides helpful antibodies.

You do not need to isolate your baby completely.

### 5 When should I get help?



#### GREEN — usually manage at home

- Comfortable; breathing normally for them.
- Feeding reasonably; alert; usual wet nappies.



#### AMBER — call NHS 111 now for urgent advice

- Worsening cold or breathing faster than usual.
- Only taking **half to three-quarters** (or less) of usual milk, or breastfeeding is much harder.
- No wet nappy for **12 hours**, or shows other signs of dehydration. Seek help early if worried – do not wait for 12 hours without a wet nappy.
- Very tired, irritable, not themselves, or you are worried.



#### RED – Call 999 now or go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E)

- Difficulty breathing: grunting, sucking in under the ribs, or very fast breathing.
- Pauses or slowed in breathing.
- Blue or grey lips, tongue or skin. On darker skin, also check lips, gums, palms and soles.
- Floppy, exhausted, difficult to wake or cannot stay awake.

