

# TOP 5 REASONS FOR Hospitalizations

## AMONG U.S. INFANTS LESS THAN 1 YEAR OF AGE

### 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.

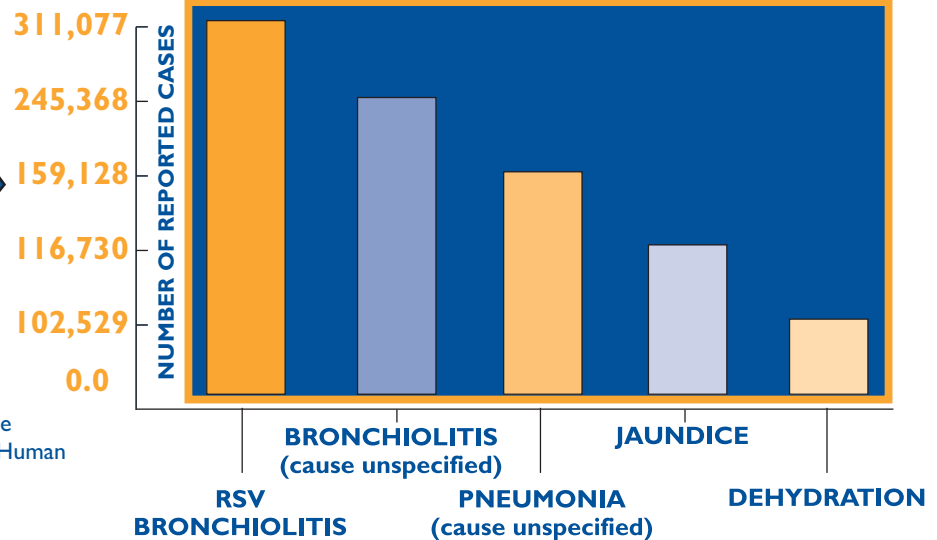
Because babies' immune systems are not fully developed, they are more at risk for catching germs which can lead to infections when compared to other children and adults.

### HELPING TO PROTECT YOUR BABY

Your baby has been cleared for discharge from the hospital. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions and visit your pediatric healthcare provider or clinic for regular evaluations, medical care and immunizations.



**Top 5 Reasons For Hospitalizations Among U.S. Infants Less Than 1 Year of Age\***



\*National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Hospital Discharge Survey 1997-2000. Leader S, Kohlhasse KF. *J Peds.* 143[5]:S127-S132 2003.



Helping Parents



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# 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 generally causes moderate to severe, cold-like symptoms in most babies, older kids and adults. But it can cause serious respiratory infections, such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia, in babies born early (less than 36 weeks). RSV season usually starts in the fall and runs through the spring, but it can be different in certain parts of the country.

**Severe symptoms in your baby (reasons to call your doctor)**

**may include:**

- Troubled or rapid breathing
- Fever: A rectal temperature greater than 100.4°F (38°C) in infants under 3 months of age is cause for concern.
- Gaspings 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 disease is very common among young children and the virus easily spreads from child to child.
- Do not smoke anywhere near your baby. Exposure to tobacco smoke increases the risk of severe RSV illness.
- Speak to your healthcare provider about other options available to help prevent RSV disease.

## JAUNDICE

**Jaundice** (*JAWN-diss*) is a yellowish color of the skin, the mucous membranes, or the eyes due to an excess of bilirubin in the blood. Bilirubin is a by-product of the normal breakdown of old red blood cells. Jaundice is due to the immaturity of the baby's liver, which leads to a slow removal of bilirubin. Though mild jaundice is common in the first week of life, extreme or ongoing jaundice may be a sign of toxic build-up of bilirubin, which can damage the brain.

**Prevention:**

- Feed babies often and do not let them become dehydrated.
- Watch for discoloration, such as yellow to orange skin 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: In infants under 3 months of age, a rectal temperature greater than 100.4°F (38°C) is cause for concern.

**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 can help prevent the spread of viruses that cause bronchiolitis.

## PNEUMONIA

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

**Symptoms in your baby may include:**

- Cough with greenish, yellow, or bloody mucus
- Fever with shaking chills. In infants under 3 months of age, a rectal temperature greater than 100.4°F (38°C) is cause for concern.
- 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 certain types of pneumonia in children. Speak to your healthcare provider about what is right for your baby.

## DEHYDRATION

**Dehydration** (*dee-hahy-DREY-shuhn*) means your baby's body does not contain as much fluid 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 mouth and skin
- Markedly sunken fontanelle (the soft spot on the top of an infant's head)
- Sleepiness or irritability

**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 for educational purposes only and is not intended to substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult with a healthcare professional if you have any questions about the health of your child.**