

Children's Emergency Department

Blocked Nose in Babies: Snuffles



A blocked nose (snuffles) is common in babies under six months of age. It is usually due to normal mucus that collects in the nose which is difficult for the baby to clear. Most cases of snuffles are not caused by colds or infections although an infection can make things worse.

A baby who just has snuffles will be otherwise well, but may 'snort' when breathing. However, feeding can become difficult if the baby cannot breathe through their nose easily. All babies under the age of six months can only breathe through their nose, not their mouth, and so can tire very easily if their nose is blocked. The measures below will help to ease the problem.

What should I do now?

- Nothing needs to be done if your baby is happy and able to feed;
- If feeding becomes difficult try gently stroking the inside of a nostril with a wisp of cotton wool to make baby sneeze and clear the blocked mucus. You can also use small suckers, available from pharmacists or baby shops, to suck the mucus from your baby's nostrils before feeding and sleep;
- Try placing a bowl of warm water in their room to help in humidify the air;
- If the above does not work then try using saline drops – these thin the mucus and make it easier for your baby to clear their nose. Either purchase from a chemists or make your own: ½ teaspoon salt in 250ml water. Keep in a sterile bottle for up to five days. Use a cotton wool ball to drip two drops into each nostril before feeds and sleep **only if**, the nose is blocked;



Patient Information

- Do not smoke cigarettes near your baby. Children who are exposed to cigarette smoke before or after they are born have a much higher chance of getting chest illnesses such as bronchiolitis, asthma, croup and pneumonia;
- If your baby is miserable then give them Paracetamol syrup (Calpol) every 4 hours. Ensure you give the correct dose; excess Paracetamol can cause liver damage.

Return to your nearest Emergency Department if:

- Your child is less than three months old and has a fever.
- Your baby has trouble breathing, is breathing very fast or irregularly.
- Your baby goes blue in colour, is pale and sweaty or seems tired and floppy.
- Your child looks or appears to be very ill or you are otherwise concerned.

For further advice/information:

- Call NHS 111 (24 hours a day)
- Contact your GP or Health Visitor

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 6934 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

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