



**University Hospitals Birmingham**  
NHS Foundation Trust



# **Viral Wheeze Discharge Information**

**Building healthier lives**

**UHB is a no smoking Trust**

## What is viral wheeze?

When small children catch a cold caused by a virus, the virus causes irritation to the breathing tubes in the lungs, making them narrower. This means they breathe harder and make a wheeze sound. They will usually recover from this within a few days.

## What can I do to help?

- Keep giving their regular preventer (if they have one)
- Follow the advice below for the blue salbutamol reliever inhaler
- Avoid other irritants to the lungs such as cigarette smoke or vaping fumes and highly polluted areas (see below smoking/vaping advice)
- Give them lots of drinks

## Does my child have asthma?

No, most children who wheeze with viral illnesses grow out of it. A small number of children will go on to have asthma. If you notice that your child has a dry cough or wheeze in between colds please speak to your doctor.

### How much blue salbutamol inhaler should I give after discharge?

- 10 puffs every 4 hours for 24 hours
- Then 6 puffs every 4 hours for 24 hours
- Then 4 puffs every 4 hours for 24 hours
- Then 2 puffs as and when required

Next time they get a cold use the guidance below “Next time my child gets viral wheeze”

The blue salbutamol inhaler you were discharged with is now **empty**. Please get a **replacement** inhaler from your GP practice.

Please dispose of empty inhalers at your local pharmacy.

## Inhaler and spacer technique

Scan this QR code for a video on how to use the inhaler and spacer.



1. Remove the cap and hold the inhaler upright
2. Shake the inhaler
3. Push the inhaler into the rubber end of the spacer
4. Place the soft mask onto the face covering the mouth and nose
5. Keep the mask firmly against the face so that no air escapes and ensure your child can easily breathe through the mask
6. Press down on the inhaler (a "puff")
7. Keep the mask firmly against the face while your child takes 10 breaths
8. Wait one minute and repeat for one more puff. This helps the second puff get further into the lungs
9. If additional puffs are needed, shake the inhaler between every two puffs
10. Replace the cap when finished

### Cigarette smoke and vaping fumes

Smoking and vaping have been shown to be the biggest factors that lead to a child getting wheeze and asthma in the long-term and causing more severe illnesses.

If you feel ready to consider stopping smoking, scan this QR code to find your local stop smoking service at **[www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/find-your-local-stop-smoking-service/](https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/find-your-local-stop-smoking-service/)**



## GREEN ZONE – mild

Your child has a cold, a wheeze and some shortness of breath, but are still able to play and go to nursery or school.

Give them **2 puffs** of the blue salbutamol inhaler up to every **4 hours** as described above. They may need this for a few days, but if they are not getting better, get an appointment to see your GP.

If after 2 puffs you are worried they still have chest tightness, move to the amber zone.

## AMBER ZONE – getting worse

Your child is wheezy and short of breath and is not able to play or be active as normal and/or have a dry troublesome cough that won't settle.

Give them a further **2 puffs** of the blue salbutamol inhaler via the spacer device as described above. Repeat this every **10 minutes** up to **6 puffs**.

You can give **6 puffs** every **4 hours** if required, but you must book an appointment to see your doctor within the next 24 hours.

If you are worried they still have a wheeze or chest tightness after 6 puffs, move to the RED ZONE.

## RED ZONE – severe

If your child still has symptoms after 6 puffs, they need more blue inhaler **within 4 hours** or you are worried they are not getting better:

Give **10 puffs** of blue salbutamol inhaler as per the technique above.

Arrange for an urgent review the same day either with your GP or go to the emergency department if this is not possible.

### If your child is:

- Breathing fast
- Struggling or using a lot of effort to breathe and the skin between their ribs and at the top of the neck is sucking in
- Getting tired
- Unable to talk, grunting or panting
- Pale/blue/grey around the lips or face

## Call 999

Whilst waiting for the ambulance give your child one puff of their blue inhaler every 30 seconds, taking 5 breaths/20 seconds for every puff given.

## Useful information

The Beat Asthma website has useful information on viral wheeze, go to this link: **<https://www.beatasthma.co.uk/resources/families-children/younger-children-who-wheeze/>**

Or scan this QR code



Please use the space below to write down any questions you may have and bring this with you to your next appointment.

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If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email **[patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk)**.

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