

## Preschool Wheeze



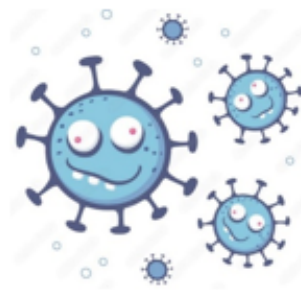
is a condition that affects the tiny breathing tubes that carry air in the lungs in children aged 2-6 years

**Wheeze** is a whistling sound from the chest usually heard when the child breathes out. This can sometimes only be heard with a stethoscope. It occurs when the muscles in the airway tubes narrow or when there is a build-up of mucus in the airways. This narrowing of the airways can makes it harder to breathe.

### Do many children get Preschool Wheeze?

One in 3 children will have an episode of wheeze.

### What is the cause of Preschool Wheeze?



The main cause of Preschool Wheeze is often a **viral infection** or cold.

**Viral wheeze** is more common in premature babies, those who have had bronchiolitis as a baby or who are around people who smoke.

Between viral illnesses, most children with Preschool Wheeze are well. Some children have many other triggers for wheeze including house dust mites allergy, passive smoking /vaping, exercise, cold air, grass or tree pollen allergy, sprays, pollution or mould allergy.

### What symptoms does a child with Preschool Wheeze have?

Symptoms can vary from mild to severe:

- Starts with runny nose or cold
- Wheezing and coughing
- Difficulty breathing – may be seen as sucking in of spaces between ribs
- Rapid breathing
- Tight chest and sore tummy
- Tiredness, reduced fluid and diet intake or fever

### How is a diagnosis of Preschool Wheeze made?

A doctor can diagnose Preschool Wheeze by listening to your child's chest and understanding their symptoms. Tests are not usually required.



### Does My Child Have Asthma?

Preschool wheeze does not mean your child has asthma. More than half of children with Presechool Wheeze will grow out of it and not go on to develop asthma.

# Preschool Wheeze

Learn signs and symptoms,  
treatment regimen, care at home  
and when to seek help

It is difficult to predict which ones will get asthma as young children have narrow airways and frequent colds. Asthma may be more likely if your child has eczema, hay fever or food allergies or has a parent or sibling with asthma.

### How do I manage my child's Preschool Wheeze?



As your child recovers from the virus, the wheezing will improve on its own without any treatment. In most cases you manage this at home.

- Keep them home from school or day care until they have recovered.
- Give paracetamol for fever or if they are miserable and upset, saline drops if nose is blocked and encourage fluids little and often.
- Antibiotics are not helpful.
- Salbutamol or Ventolin (blue inhaler called reliever) is a bronchodilator (opens up airways by relaxing the tiny narrowed muscular tubes) which may give temporary relief of symptoms such as wheeze.

If your child is discharged from hospital you will be advised how to treat wheeze at home with salbutamol. If your child is needing salbutamol (reliever blue inhaler) more often than every 4 hours, attend the emergency department/ or GP. Take 6 puffs of salbutamol on the way if concerned.

If symptoms become severe such as increasing or severe wheeze, hard and fast breathing, difficulty with talking or blueness of lips

### STAY CALM BUT TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

Take 6 puffs of reliever blue inhaler in ten minutes. Call 999 or 112 and repeat 6 puffs until you have medical support.

### What will happen if my child is admitted to hospital?



If your child is severe enough to require admission your doctor may prescribe a short course of oral steroids

Your child may require oxygen via soft plastic tubes that fit in the nose.

Your child may require feeding through a nasogastric tube (a tube through the nose into the stomach) or fluid through an intravenous drip (

into a vein)

### How long will my child take to recover?

Your child can take from a **few days to up to a few weeks** to recover from all the symptoms. During Winter it is not unusual for a child to return to baseline for a few days before a new virus is contracted causing a new episode of viral induced wheeze.

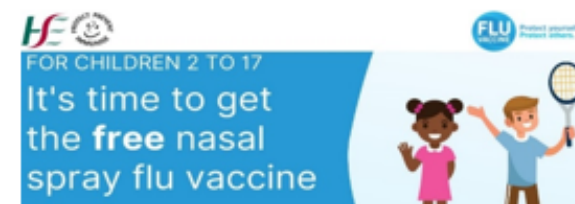
### How can I prevent Preschool Wheeze?



- Encourage your child to wash their hands and to cover their mouth when coughing
- Make sure your child's environment is smoke free. The HSE provides and promotes a wide

range of cessation services, ranging from online and social media supports on QUIT.ie and Facebook - [HSEquit](#), a National Smokers' [QUITline](#) 1800201203.

- Keep your house warm, avoid dampness and eliminate [moulds](#). Preschool Wheeze is more frequent during the September to March viral season so your child may have more frequent episodes during this time.



- Avail of seasonal influenza vaccine in [Autumn](#) for all eligible members of family.
- If your child has frequent or severe symptoms your doctor may advise a three month course of inhaled steroids. If the child improves inhaled steroids are not continued as most will be growing out of wheezing episodes or may be entering the April – August period. If your child has frequent episodes a further trial of inhaled steroids may be advised.
- If episodes are severe or frequent you will be referred to the [paediatric respiratory outpatients](#) for review by a specialist.

If you have any further health concerns and want more information, get help from your local General Practitioner (GP) in your area