

# Bronchopulmonary dysplasia

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What is bronchopulmonary dysplasia?

Bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD) is a form of chronic lung disease. It occurs in infants who have had severe Respiratory Distress Syndrome (RDS), lung infection or were extremely premature at birth.

What causes BPD?

BPD is a reaction of the premature lung to the oxygen and mechanical ventilation that were needed to treat the infant's lung disease. Occasionally very premature infants get BPD even if they did not need mechanical ventilation or much extra oxygen after birth.

How will I know if my baby has BPD?

BPD is usually diagnosed if a baby continues to have an abnormal chest x-ray and still needs oxygen by the time a baby is 36 weeks of gestation (a month before the due date). However, your baby's doctor may be concerned enough to treat your baby's continuing lung disease long before this date. A baby with BPD may also demonstrate one or more of the following:

- rapid breathing
- more difficult breathing
- wheezing or noisy breathing
- wet or crackling sound to the lungs heard with a stethoscope
- more difficult time growing

How is BPD treated?

A baby with BPD needs extra oxygen for a long period of time. This may be several weeks or months, occasionally for more than a year. Babies with BPD may be discharged on home oxygen.

Some babies are treated with other medications. These might include:

- Steroids - drugs to decrease the body's reaction to oxygen
- Diuretics - drugs to help the body to get rid of extra water
- Drugs to decrease wheezing

## Why is my baby sometimes fussy?

Babies with BPD are often more fussy than other infants. This may be due to some of the medicines they need to take, congestion in their lungs, and frequent medical procedures they receive.

## What can be done for the irritability?

We can reduce environmental stimulation by:

1. covering the isolette
2. talking softly
3. allowing rest times

We can also give him or her a pacifier, try different positions and play soft music. You can help us with these things and we welcome your ideas. As a last resort, a calming medicine may be given.

## When will he or she get better?

Steady weight gain is an important part of healing. Until your baby can suck without getting too tired, he or she will be fed by tube feedings and/or intravenous (IV) fluid (these IV fluids sometimes include hyperalimentation and intralipids and contain sugar, protein and fat).

The changes that have occurred in your baby's lungs can take a long time to heal. It is too early to know if there is any permanent damage. There may be setbacks caused by infections, particularly pneumonia.

## Will BPD affect my child's development?

Social and mental development may also go at a slower pace. The extra work of breathing may mean that your baby has less energy and strength to grow and develop over the next several months. Your child should be followed closely after discharge by his or her doctor. It is difficult to predict now whether there will be any permanent effects on development.

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