

Cough/breathlessness pathway for children ≥ 1 year of age



Clinical support tool for remote clinical assessment by NHS 111 clinicians

Clinical findings	Green – low risk	Amber – intermediate risk	Red – high risk
Colour Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal colour or skin, lips and tongue • Alert, responds normally to social cues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pale • Lethargic (wakes only after moderate stimulation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue or grey colour • Unable to rouse, or wakes only after vigorous stimulation • Confusion
Respiratory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None of amber or red symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR >40 breaths/min if age 12 months – 23 months • RR >35 breaths/min if age 2-5 years • RR >30 breaths/min if age 5 -12 years • RR >25 breaths/min if age >12 years • Mild / Moderate resp distress • Audible stridor on exertion/distress only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grunting • Audible stridor at rest • Severe tachypnoea: RR > 10 breaths per minute above amber levels • Severe respiratory distress • Unable to complete sentences
Circulation / hydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None of amber or red symptoms • Able to tolerate some fluids • Passing urine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold hands and feet in absence of fever • Reduced urine output • Not tolerating fluids / repeated vomiting • Unable to swallow saliva 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden onset and parental concern about inhaled foreign body
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None of amber or red symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever for ≥ 5 days • Risk factors for severe disease – known asthma, chronic lung disease, bronchiectasis/CF, immunodeficiency etc • Additional parental/carer support required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden onset and parental concern about inhaled foreign body

Green Action

Provide cough 1 year and over safety netting advice.
 Confirm they are comfortable with the decisions/ advice given.
 Always consider safeguarding issues.

Amber Action

Refer to primary care service for review

Red Action

Refer immediately to emergency care – consider whether 999 transfer or parent/taxi most appropriate based on clinical acuity etc.