TPPC INFORMATION HANDOUT:

**<| BRONCHIOLITIS |>**

**Description** (Diagnosis must be confirmed by a physician. )

 Your child is wheezing. This means that when your child breathes out he or she makes a high-pitched whistling sound.

 Your child is breathing rapidly at a rate of over 40 breaths per minute.

 Your child has to push the air out (tight breathing).

 Your child has a cough and may cough up a very sticky mucus.

 Often a fever and a runny nose precede the breathing problems and cough.

The symptoms are similar to asthma.

The average age of children who get bronchiolitis is 6 months.

**Cause**

The wheezing is caused by a narrowing of the smallest airways in the lung (bronchioles). This narrowing results from inflammation (swelling) caused by a virus, usually the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). RSV occurs in epidemics almost every winter. While infants with RSV develop bronchiolitis, children over age 2 years and adults usually just develop cold symptoms.

**Expected Course**

Wheezing and tight breathing ( difficulty breathing out) become worse for 2 or 3 days and

then begin to improve. Overall, the wheezing lasts approximately 7 days and the cough about 14 days.

The most common complication of bronchiolitis is an ear infection, occurring in some 20% of infants. Bacterial pneumonia is an uncommon complication. Only 1% or 2% of children with bronchiolitis are hospitalized because they need oxygen or intravenous fluids.

In the long run, approximately 30% of the children who develop bronchiolitis later develop

asthma. Recurrences of wheezing (asthma) occur mainly in children who have close relatives with asthma. Asthma is easily treated with medications.

**Treatment**.

**Medicines.** Some children with bronchiolitis respond to asthma-type medicines, but others do not. You should check with Dr. Perkins before you use any medications. In addition, you can give your child acetaminophen every 4 to 6 hours or ibuprofen every 6 to 8 hours if the fever is over 102°F (39°C).

**Warm fluids for coughing spasms**. Coughing spasms are often caused by sticky secretions in the back of the throat. Warm liquids usually relax the airway and loosen the secretions. Offer warm lemonade or apple juice if your child is over 4 months old. In addition, breathing warm moist air helps to loosen up the sticky mucus that may be choking your child. You can provide warm mist by placing a warm wet washcloth loosely over your child's nose and mouth. Or you can fill a humidifier with warm water and have your child breathe in the warm mist it produces. Avoid steam vaporizers because they can cause burns.

**Humidity.** Dry air tends to make coughs worse. Use a humidifier in your child's bedroom. The new ultrasonic humidifiers are very quiet and they kill molds and most bacteria that might be in the water. If possible, use distilled water instead of tap water in the humidifier. The Environmental Protection Agency reported in 1988 that tap water may contain harmful minerals (such as lead and asbestos). If these minerals are in your tap water, they will also be in the mist produced by the humidifier. Frequent inhaling of these particles may cause chronic lung problems.

**Suction of a blocked nose.** If the nose is blocked up, your child will not be able to drink from a bottle or to breast-feed. Most stuffy noses are blocked by dry or sticky mucus. Suction alone cannot remove dry secretions. Warm tap-water or saline nose drops are better than any medicine you can buy for loosening up mucus. Place three drops of warm water or saline in one nostril. After about 30 seconds, Add 3 more drops, then use a soft rubber suction bulb to suck out the mucus. Repeat for the other nostril. You can repeat this procedure several times until your child's breathing through the nose becomes quiet and easy.

**Feedings.** Encourage your child to drink enough fluids.

Eating is often tiring, so offer your child formula, breast milk, or regular milk (if he is over 1 year old) in smaller amounts at more frequent intervals. If your child vomits during a coughing spasm, feed him or her again.

**No smoking.** Tobacco smoke aggravates coughing. Children who have an RSV infection are much more likely to wheeze if they are exposed to tobacco smoke. Don't let anyone smoke around your child. In fact, try not to let anybody smoke inside your home.

**Call Your Child's Physician Immediately If:**

 Breathing becomes labored or difficult.

 The wheezing becomes severe (tight).

 Breathing becomes faster than 60 breaths per minute (when your child is not crying).

**Call Your Child's Physician Within 24 Hours If:**

 Any fever lasts more than 3 days.

 The cough lasts more than 3 weeks.

 If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse.