

## PREVENTING CROUP

Croup is easily spread among children. The best way to prevent croup is to fight the spread of germs: wash your child's hands often with soap and water and avoid people who have respiratory tract infections like colds and flu.

## WHEN TO SEEK EMERGENCY MEDICAL HELP

Seek emergency medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms:

- Appears agitated or extremely irritable
- Drooling or trouble swallowing
- Blue lips/ fingers

High fever - above 39 C (102 F)

- Difficulty breathing, skin between ribs pulls in with each breath.

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the lung association

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## CROUP

### What you need to know



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Croup is a viral infection that causes swelling in the throat and vocal cords (larynx). Croup commonly affects children under five because their airways are smaller and more prone to swelling. One of the telltale signs of croup is a loud, “barky” cough that is worse at night.

## WHAT CAUSES CROUP?

Children can get croup from many different viruses. The most common are parainfluenza, influenza (flu), adenovirus, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and measles. Croup is most common in the winter and early spring. This is when viruses that cause croup peak.

## SYMPTOMS OF CROUP

At first, your child may have typical cold symptoms like a runny or stuffy nose and fever. As the throat and voice box become more swollen, your child may have a raspy voice then develop a harsh barky cough. This cough is often worse at night or when your child is crying.

These signs and symptoms are common with croup:

- A loud cough that sounds like a barking seal
- A wheezing or grunting noise while breathing
- Hoarse, raspy voice
- Cold symptoms - runny or stuffy nose, fever, feeling tired

Health professionals can usually diagnose croup by paying attention to your child's cough and breathing. They will also check for fever, cold symptoms, or a recent viral infection. If your child's croup is serious and not getting better with treatment, the health professional may order an x-ray to rule out any other causes for the breathing problems

## HOME TREATMENTS

Most cases of croup are mild and don't need medical treatment. If your child has a mild case of croup, there are many things you can do at home to make them feel better.

-Stay calm. Croup can be scary for children. Staying calm and speaking quietly will soothe your child and make breathing easier. Try reading stories, listening to music or playing a quiet game.

- Sit your child upright to make it easier for them to breathe.

- Give your child moist air to breathe. Turn on the hot water in the shower and close the door. When the bathroom is steamy, shut off the water, close the door, then sit with your child in the steamy air for 10 - 15 minutes. Be sure to keep your child away from the hot water to avoid burns.

- Take your child outside for a few minutes to breathe cool night air. Be sure to dress your child if it is cold outside

- If it's cool outside, bundle your child up and buckle them into their car seat. Keeping your car heater turned off, drive around 10- 20 minutes. Sitting upright in the cool air will help your child breathe easier.

- Give your child lots of clear fluids to drink - diluted juice, water, popsicles are good choices.

- If your child has a fever and is uncomfortable, treat their fever with acetaminophen. (Childrens Tylenol).

- Sleep in the same room as your child or within hearing distance to monitor their breathing. If symptoms do not get better with home remedies, consult your health care professional.

- Don't give your child cough syrups or other medicines unless a health care professional recommends it

## MEDICAL TREATMENT

In more serious cases, the health professional may prescribe corticosteroids to reduce swelling in your child's airways and make breathing easier. Antibiotics are not used to treat croup since a virus causes it.

Croup usually lasts 3-7 days and is worse at night. The symptoms usually peak on the second or third night.