



Croup

Information for Parents

What is croup?

Croup is an infection usually caused by a common cold virus. It causes swelling and narrowing of the breathing passages in and below the throat. A harsh barking cough that sounds like a barking seal is usually present. The cough generally begins at night and you may also hear a “stridor” (a noise when breathing in). Croup is a common condition affecting children between the ages of 6 months to 4 years. It occasionally affects older children. In most cases it gets better on its own in 24 - 48 hours, but in some cases hospital admission and close observation is necessary.

What can you do to help?

- Remain calm.
- The sound of the cough can be frightening so keeping calm will help your child remain calm.
- It will make it easier for your child to breathe if you let them choose a comfortable position.

What treatment is available?

There is no treatment for the virus that causes croup. Treatment is given to help your child cope with the symptoms and allow them to breathe more easily.

The doctor may prescribe any of the following;

- Dexamethasone, this is a steroid that is effective in reducing the swelling in the throat.
- Paracetamol or ibuprofen, to help bring your child’s temperature down and help them feel more comfortable.
- A medicine given through a nebuliser (face mask) opens up the air passages and helps your child to breathe.

Your child may be admitted to hospital. The nurses and doctors in the team will carefully monitor your child’s condition. The nurses will make regular observations of your child’s temperature, pulse, breathing and oxygen levels.

Very occasionally a child with croup may develop severe breathing difficulties. They may need to be transferred to an Intensive Care Unit to support their breathing for a short period of time.

What can you do to help?

- Staying with your child will help to keep them calm.
- Offer small, frequent fluids.
- Tell the nurse if your child feels hot.

What should I do if my child gets croup again?

- Remember to stay calm.
- Reassure your child.
- Check on your child in the night.
- Keep your child away from nursery or school until they are better.
- Using steam is not advised, and has not been proven to have any benefit.

Call the doctor or return to the hospital if:

- your child has a sore throat and is unable to drink,
- your child has a temperature that you cannot bring down with paracetamol and ibuprofen,
- you are worried.

Your child needs to go to hospital immediately in an ambulance if they are showing any of these signs,

- dribbling, as this may indicate your child has an obstruction or swelling in their throat,
- restless and difficult to settle,
- sucking in their chest and throat when they take a breath,
- too breathless to talk,
- pale and/or limp,
- breathing noisily when they breath in (stridor),
- looks blue around the lips.

If you need further advice please ring:

Starlight Children’s ward Tel: 0161 291 2248/2669

Starlight Children’s Observation & Assessment Unit Tel: 0161 291 5459

Paediatric A&E Tel : 0161 291 6061

Wythenshawe Hospital
Southmoor Road
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Community nurse team:.....

