

Advice about Croup

Information for parents and carers



What is croup?

Croup is a viral infection that affects the upper airways and voice box in children. There is inflammation (swelling) of the air passages leading to noisy breathing and a barking cough. Croup is common in babies and young children. The condition is more common in winter and spring and many children have a cold for a day or two before they develop croup. The noisy breathing and barking cough can occur suddenly and often at night time.

Who does croup normally effect?

3 out of 100 children may develop croup. It mainly affects children between 6 months and 3 years of age and is most common during the second year of life.

How do children catch croup?

Croup can be caused by several different viruses and is spread like the common cold. It is normally spread through respiratory droplets in the air produced by an infected person coughing and sneezing.

What are the signs of croup?

- Sore throat
- Hoarse voice
- Struggling to breathe, noise when breathing in (stridor)
- Temperature
- Harsh, barking cough.

What is the treatment for croup?

The doctor may prescribe a dose of oral steroid to help reduce the inflammation in your child's throat, a repeat dose may be required. Paracetamol or ibuprofen can be given to relieve a temperature and any discomfort. Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Comfort and reassure your child, if your child is agitated and crying the symptoms may become worse. Sitting your child upright can help their breathing.

If your child is struggling with their breathing they may need to be given inhaled steroids or adrenaline via a nebuliser to help reduce the swelling.

These medicines are given by a face mask and breathed in by your child. Very rarely croup can be very severe and a child may need assistance with their breathing until the swelling goes down.

Seek further medical advice immediately if your child shows any of the following signs:

- Increased difficulty of breathing
- Looks unusually pale
- Restless or agitated
- High fever

Dial 999 for an emergency ambulance if your child is:

- Blue in the face
- Struggling to breathe
- Unusually sleepy
- Drooling saliva and unable to swallow

How long does croup last for?

Children with croup usually improve over 3-4 days, they may worsen at night time. The croupy cough can last up to a week. Occasionally repeated doses of steroids are required.

Will there be any long term effects?

There are no long term effects, however some children can get croup a number of times.

What should I do if I have any concerns after I take my child home?

If you have any concerns after you have taken your child home please contact your GP or call NHS111. If you are worried about your child's breathing or consider it an emergency call for an ambulance or take your child to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.

Further Information

For further information please visit:
www.nhs.uk/conditions/croup
www.patient.co.uk/health/croup

Your Medication:

Do you require a special edition of this leaflet?

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, electronically and in other languages on request.

Please contact the Patient Experience Team on:

Telephone 01244 366066 or email coch.patientexperience@nhs.net

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若是你索取這份傳單的中文譯本，請聯絡「病人預約中心」或向其中一名職員查詢。

Si vous voulez cette brochure en français, contactez le bureau des rendez-vous ou demandez à un membre du personnel.

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Si desea recibir este folleto en español, sírvase contactar al Centro de Citas para Pacientes o solicitarlo al personal.

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