

CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH CROUP

A child with croup has a froggy voice and a cough that sounds like a seal bark, because the larynx (voice box) and trachea (windpipe) are swollen.



Croup is usually caused by a virus, such as the flu virus.



The health care provider usually makes a diagnosis by using a medical history and physical examination.

What Is Croup?

Croup (or laryngotracheobronchitis) is a respiratory infection that mainly affects children. The larynx (voice box) and trachea (windpipe) going into the lungs become irritated and swollen. Children have a very hoarse voice and a cough that sounds like a seal barking. Children and parents may be frightened because it is hard for air to go in and out of the lungs and children find it hard to breathe.

Young children between 3 months and 5 years old are more prone to croup. Boys seem to get it more often than girls. Croup is also more likely in children who have at least one parent with asthma or allergies.

Most cases are not serious, and complications are rare. A few children can have pneumonia or serious bacterial infection in the lungs.

What Causes Croup?

An infection in the throat or lungs can lead to croup. The infection is usually due to a virus, such as the flu virus.

What Are the Symptoms of Croup?

Many children have a sore throat, runny nose, or fever before croup. Croup symptoms include a hoarse voice, cough that sounds like a barking seal, fast breathing, and a high-pitched, windy sound while trying to breathe air into the lungs.

Symptoms get worse when the child lies down. Often, symptoms are worse at night.

How Is Croup Diagnosed?

The health care provider makes a diagnosis from a medical history and physical examination. X-rays of the child's neck and lungs may be done. X-rays may show swelling of the neck and whether something is stuck or pus or blood in the airway is causing symptoms.

Blood tests may be done if the health care provider suspects that the infection could be due to bacteria.



Antibiotics and cough medicines will NOT cure a viral infection.



Your child may need medicine that reduces swelling in the airways. Breathing moist cold air may also help.



Get emergency care if your child has trouble breathing, is pale, or has bluish lips, face, or fingers.

How Is Croup Treated?

Antibiotics don't help because a virus causes croup. Cough medicines also don't help much. Acetaminophen may lower the fever.

Having the child breathe air that is very moist (humid) or very cold may help. Provide moist air by going into a steamy bathroom. For cold air, wrap the child in a warm blanket and stand outside in the cold air for a few minutes.

The health care provider may prescribe medicine to reduce airway swelling. In severe cases, the health care provider may refer a child who has trouble breathing to the emergency department for oxygen.

Children who don't respond to these treatments may need corticosteroids (injected, by mouth, by nebulizer). Sometimes, children need admission to a hospital.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Croup:

- ✓ **DO** wash hands often, which is the best way to stop the spread of infections.
- ✓ **DO** keep your children away from children with a sore throat or runny nose.
- ✓ **DO** get emergency care if your child has trouble breathing and is very pale or has blue lips, face, or fingers. Get emergency care if the child doesn't wake up when you talk to or gently shake the child.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if symptoms don't get better or are getting worse.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you think that your child has side effects from medicine.
- ⊗ **DON'T** forget to give your child medicine as instructed by the health care provider.
- ⊗ **DON'T** forget follow-up health care provider appointments.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- Website: <http://www.familydoctor.org>
- The American Academy of Pediatrics
Tel: (847) 434-4000
Website: <http://www.aap.org>