
What is croup?

Croup is a respiratory illness that affects the voice box (larynx) and the airway to the lungs (trachea). Croup is characterised by the sudden onset of a seal-like, barking cough that is usually accompanied by a rasping sound when breathing in, known as stridor. Children may also have a hoarse voice and find it difficult to breathe. Most cases are mild but occasionally children need emergency treatment for croup.

What causes croup?

Croup is often caused by a virus that is passed on from one person to another. In some very rare situations croup can be caused by bacteria. This virus or bacteria causes the voice box and wind pipe to become swollen, and sometimes makes it difficult for a child to breathe.

Who is affected?

Croup typically occurs between the ages of six months to six years, but it is less common in children over the age of three. This is because young children have a differently shaped airway to older children and adults, which causes the cough to sound different when their airways become inflamed and swollen. Children are often well through the day, and wake suddenly through the night struggling to breathe, and this is when the barking cough is first heard.

What is the treatment for croup?

Treatment depends on how severe the symptoms are. Mild cases can be treated at home by:

- Sitting your child upright and comforting them if they are distressed. This is important because crying may make the symptoms worse
- Encouraging your child to drink plenty of fluids to stop them from becoming dehydrated
- Keeping your child cool if they have a fever, by removing layers of clothing and blankets, and keeping them in a cool environment (with a window open or a fan circulating in the room)
- Paracetamol and/or ibuprofen may be given if they are irritable or in pain
- Children may also suffer from the symptoms of a common cold, so ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice in treating your child's symptoms.

In moderate to severe cases, your child may need treatment in hospital and occasionally children require admission to manage the symptoms of croup. There is no treatment that will stop the viral infection, but there are some supportive treatments that can improve the symptoms of croup:

- Dexamethasone is a steroid which helps reduce the swelling in the airway. Your child may be given this medication, and repeat doses of steroids may be given if the doctor thinks it is necessary
- Nebulisers can deliver medication via a face mask around the nose and mouth, which are fuelled by oxygen to create a mist that can be inhaled. These can help to open the airway in

severe cases of croup and make it easier for your child to breathe. This does not hurt but some children become upset because they do not like the mask or mist near their face.

Recovering from croup

Most cases of croup clear up within 48 hours. Following one dose of the steroid most children are much improved. You may be sent home with a second dose to give your child after 12 hours.

Your child can get croup more than once. You can help to prevent this with good hygiene, such as regularly washing hands and cleaning surfaces in your home. Some childhood vaccinations can help prevent some of the infections that cause croup, so ensuring your child is up to date with all vaccinations is important.

Contacts

If you are worried about your child following discharge please take them to your GP or A&E, if you have any queries/questions please contact ward 10 on 01493 452010

Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

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 The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240