



## Croup

Croup is an inflammation (swelling) of the trachea (windpipe) and larynx (voice box) often caused by a viral infection during a cold or viral upper respiratory infection. It usually lasts 5-6 days and generally is worse at night. Because of its viral cause, antibiotics (medications which kill germs) will not help in treatment. It is generally characterized by a barking or seal-like cough, harsh or raspy sound when your child breathes in (stridor), hoarse voice and a low grade fever.

### HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Calm your child during an attack. This will help his or her breathing. Remain calm yourself. Gently holding your child to your chest and talking soothingly and calmly and rubbing their back will help lessen their fears and help them breath more easily.
- Sitting in a steam-filled room with your child may help. Running water forcefully from a shower or into a tub in a closed bathroom for at least 10 minutes with the door closed.
- If the night air is cool or cold, this will also help, but dress your child warmly.
- A cool mist vaporizer in your child's room will also help at night. Do not use the older hot steam vaporizers. These are not as helpful and may cause burns.
- During an attack, good hydration is important. Do not attempt to give liquids or food during a coughing spell or when breathing appears difficult. Clear fluids such as apple juice, Pedialyte® or Gatorade can help the coughing spasms.
- Watch for signs of dehydration (loss of body fluids) including dry lips and mouth and little or no urination.

It is important to be aware that croup usually gets better, but may worsen after you get home. It is very important to monitor your child's condition carefully. An adult should be with the child through the first few days of this illness. You should sleep in the same room as croup can change from mild to severe quite quickly.

### SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The bathroom steaming fails to clear up the stridor (noisy breathing) after 20 minutes.
- Your child is having trouble breathing or swallowing.
- Your child is leaning forward to breathe or is drooling. These signs along with inability to swallow may be signs of a more serious problem. Go immediately to the emergency department or call for immediate emergency help.
- Your child starts acting very sick, unusually sleepy or upset.
- Your child's skin is retracting (the skin between the ribs is being sucked in during inspiration) or the chest is being pulled in while breathing.
- Your child's lips or fingernails are becoming blue (cyanotic).
- Your child has an oral temperature above 39°C (102°F) not controlled by medicine.
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 39°C (102°F) or higher.
- Your baby is 3 months old or younger with a rectal temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or higher.

**This general advice cannot cover all possible problems. If there is concern, please contact your physician, healthcare provider or the Emergency Department without delay.**