

Croup

The aim of this leaflet is to help you to care for your child at home if he/she has croup. It explains what the condition is, how the infection is treated and gives you some helpful suggestions to aid your child's recovery at home. If you have any questions or concerns that are not answered in the leaflet, please speak to one of the nursing staff.

What is croup?

Croup is an infection of the voicebox and windpipe (laryngo-tracheo-bronchitis) that is caused by a virus. It occurs very commonly in autumn and winter and most children get mild symptoms. Croup normally affects children aged between 6 months and 6 years. Children with croup usually have a harsh barking cough and noisy breathing that starts a day or two after having a runny nose. A fever is also often present. Some children may have two or more episodes of croup.

How is croup treated?

Most children receive a steroid medicine to dampen down the inflammation of the voicebox and windpipe. A small number of children who still have breathing problems after taking the steroid medicine may need observation in hospital. A minority will need more treatment in the form of medicine that is breathed in through a mask (nebulised adrenaline) or, very rarely, support with a breathing machine.

It is very important to keep a child with croup calm. Becoming distressed and crying a lot can make the swelling around the windpipe worse and increase the breathing difficulty.

Regular paracetamol and/or ibuprofen (following the recommended dosage on the bottle / packet) will help to keep the temperature down.

In the past people used to treat croup by inhaling steam. There is no evidence that this helps and it is currently not recommended, as having a small child leaning over hot water can lead to accidental burns.

How long is it likely to last?

The symptoms of croup usually last between 1-3 days. The cough may last a week or longer.

Is it infectious?

Yes, like other viral infections such as a common cold, croup can be picked up from people around you. Older people with the virus may only have symptoms of a cold

When to seek help

Call NHS 111 or see a GP if:

- You are worried.
- Your child is making a raspy noise (known as 'stridor') every time they breathe in.
- They have a persistent temperature that is not resolved with paracetamol or ibuprofen.
- Your child is getting worse.

Go to A&E or call 999 if:

- Your child is struggling to breathe (you may see their tummy sucking inwards or their breathing sounds different).
- They are drooling or finding it difficult to swallow.
- Their skin or lips start to look blue or grey.
- They are unusually quiet and still.

Further information

[www.NHS.co.uk /croup](http://www.NHS.co.uk/croup)

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For more information about the Trust, visit our website at www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Paediatric Unit, August 2014

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