

# Advice for parents or carers of a child with croup

## What is croup?

Croup is a virus infection. It causes swelling of the voice box (larynx) and windpipe (trachea). This swelling makes the airway narrower, so it's harder to breathe.

## Can I prevent croup?

No. The viruses that cause croup are common. It is not possible to prevent a child catching them.

## What are the symptoms?

- Croup often starts with cold-like symptoms. Typically the child wakes up feeling unwell in the night.
- There may be noisy breathing (called stridor) and a barking cough.
- As your child breathes, you may see that the skin is sucked in underneath and between their ribs.
- A lot of children with croup have a raised temperature.

## How can I help my child?

- Quietly comfort your child. Crying can make things worse.
- If your child has a temperature and is uncomfortable, give him or her paracetamol (for example Calpol® or Disprol®). Follow the manufacturer's instructions that come with the paracetamol carefully. If you are not sure then ask your community pharmacist.
- If your child is already taking medicines or inhalers, you should carry on using these. If you find it difficult to get your baby to take them, ask your doctor for advice.
- Croup is caused by a virus. This means that antibiotics won't help.
- We give steroid medicines to some children with severe symptoms. If the child's breathing improves then they can usually go home.

Make sure your child is not exposed to tobacco smoke. Passive smoking can seriously damage your child's health. It makes breathing problems like croup worse.

Do not use steam inhalations or a kettle in the bedroom. They do not work. They can be harmful.

## How long does croup last?

- Most children get better in 3-5 days.
- Croup is often worse at night. Symptoms may occur again the night after going home from the Emergency Department.
- Your child can go back to nursery, school or day care as soon as he or she is well enough.
- There is usually no need to see the doctor if your child is recovering well. If you are worried about your child's progress, discuss this with your doctor or health visitor.

## When should I get advice?

### Please contact your GP or 111 if:

- You are worried about your child
- You feel that your child's condition is getting worse

### Phone 999 for an ambulance if:

- Your child is struggling to breathe (you may see their tummy suck inwards or their breathing sound different)
- Your child's tongue and lips are turning blue
- They are unusually quiet and still

More information is available on [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) – search for “croup”

### Notes:

Are you a victim of Domestic Violence? For confidential advice, contact:

Bradford	0808 2800 999	<a href="https://www.stayingput.uk.net/contact">https://www.stayingput.uk.net/contact</a>
North Yorkshire	03000 110 110	<a href="https://www.idas.org.uk/">https://www.idas.org.uk/</a>
Lancashire	0300 323 0085	<a href="https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/your-health-and-wellbeing/domestic-abuse/">https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/your-health-and-wellbeing/domestic-abuse/</a>

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01535 294019

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