

Medical & nursing care for your child

Care for children with croup focuses on helping them to breathe easily.

- Your child will be assessed to see how hard they are finding it to breathe.
- Some children with croup will be given a medication called prednisolone. This helps reduce the swelling in the windpipe, making it easier for the child to breathe.
- Children with severe croup may be given adrenaline. Adrenaline is breathed in through a mask attached to oxygen. It relieves the tightness and swelling in the voicebox and windpipe.
- Most children respond well and can go home after a few hours of observation.
- Some children need to be treated for several hours in the Emergency Department, and a few children with croup will spend one or two nights in hospital.
- Your child will be able to go home when his / her breathing is improved, and doctors are happy with their condition.

Did you know ?

If you don't already have a GP you can find a child friendly GP on the web: www.healthforkids.net.au

Important points to remember:

- Croup is a common childhood illness.
- Children with symptoms of croup should be taken to see their General Practitioner (GP) if you are at all concerned.
- The symptoms of croup sometimes last for up to a week, and often they get worse at night.
- **Call 000 for an ambulance if you are concerned about your child's ability to breathe**
- If you are concerned that your child's breathing is worsening once you get home, then you should go back to your GP or the Emergency Department.

Maternal Child and Health Support Line: 13 2229

These websites have more information on croup and other illnesses:

<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>

www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/

Southern Health

Disclaimer: This health information is for general education purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice. Please consult with your doctor and or other health care professionals to ensure individualised and appropriate health care is tailored for your child.

Information for Parents of Children with Croup



What is croup?

Croup is a common childhood illness. It is sometimes called laryngotracheobronchitis.

Croup is caused by a viral infection that causes the lining of the voicebox and windpipe to swell. This swelling may make it difficult for a child to breathe.

Croup usually affects children less than five years old because they have a smaller and softer voicebox and windpipe.

There is no way to prevent a child from getting croup. Because it is a viral disease, antibiotics are not effective in treating croup.

Did you know ?

Croup is more common in young children, but older children and teenagers can get croup too.

What are the symptoms of croup?

Children with croup normally have some of these symptoms:

- A harsh, “barking cough” (which sounds like a seal)
- Hoarse voice
- A noise when breathing in known as “stridor” (a harsh or high pitched breathing sound)

Before developing croup, children often have other symptoms of a viral infection such as a temperature, runny nose and sore throat.

The symptoms of croup sometimes last for up to a week, and often the symptoms get worse at night.

What care should I give at home?

After seeing a doctor, most children with croup can be managed at home.

- Stay calm, reassure your child
- Sit with your child in a position they find comfortable
- Try reading a favourite book or watching TV or a video with your child
- Rest is important as activity may make the symptoms worse
- Give your child small amounts of drink at regular intervals.

If a child is breastfed then do not stop, give smaller feeds more frequently.

Mist, steam or humidified air are unlikely to be effective in treating croup. Be very careful with any of these as there is a danger the child might be burned.

Did you know ?

Mist, steam or humidified air have not been shown to help symptoms of croup.

When should I take my child to a doctor?

If your child has symptoms of croup and you are concerned at all, take them to see your General Practitioner (GP). Your GP will assess your child and plan appropriate medical care.

If your child has symptoms of croup and they have an existing upper airway abnormality or chronic illness, consult your GP immediately.

Take your child to the Emergency Department, if your child:

- Has stridor (high/harsh sounds when they breathe in) while they are sleeping or sitting quietly
- Looks unwell, pale, anxious, tired
- Has a high temperature
- Is drooling
- Has considerable decrease in intake of fluids / drink over a 12 – 24 hour period

Or if your GP is not available and you are worried about your child's condition

Did you know ?

Keeping your child relaxed and comfortable can help ease the symptoms of croup

When should I call an ambulance?

If you are concerned about your child's ability to breathe, call 000 for an ambulance.

Call 000 for an ambulance if:

- If your child has difficulty in breathing
- If your child becomes floppy, agitated or confused
- Their lips or face become blue or very pale

When calling an **ambulance** you will be asked some questions, these may include:

- What is the exact address of the emergency?
- What phone number can they call you back on?
- What is the problem?
- How old is the child?
- Is the child conscious?
- Is the child breathing?