

Croup

What is croup?

Croup is a viral infection of the throat, vocal cords (larynx) and windpipe (trachea). It can spread to others easily through sneezing and coughing.

Croup may begin with a runny nose and fever, like a cold. Most croup infections are mild and can be treated at home. Croup usually lasts for 5 to 6 days.

Symptoms of croup include:

- a hoarse voice
- a cough that sounds like a bark

The symptoms of croup may start suddenly and get worse at night.

You may hear a high-pitched, rasping sound when your child breathes in. This is called stridor. Stridor is usually heard when your child is crying or coughing.

If croup gets worse, the breathing passages narrow. Breathing becomes fast and noisy. You may hear stridor even when your child is relaxed or sleeping. You may also see the chest (between ribs and below the breastbone) pull in with each breath. Breathing becomes hard work and your child may become very tired.

What can I do to help my child?

- Cold air may help your child's breathing. If it is cool outside, wrap your child warmly and go outside for 10 to 15 minutes.
 - When your child's breathing is easier, give him or her a Popsicle or cold drink. Your child needs plenty of fluids.
 - Do not let anyone smoke in your home. Smoke can make croup worse.
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When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's family doctor or pediatrician if:

- your child has a fever for more than 5 days
- you are concerned about your child

If you are not able to reach your doctor, bring your child to the Emergency Department at the hospital.

When should my child go to the Emergency Department?

Take your child to the Emergency Department if you notice **ANY** of the following:

- your child is struggling to breathe: breathing very fast, the ribs and chest pull in with each breath, or stridor when your child is resting
- your child's breathing does not get better after being in cold air for about 15 minutes
- your child has trouble swallowing: he or she will not drink or is drooling
- If your child turns blue or stops breathing, call 911.