

Children's Emergency Department

Croup: Parent/Carer Discharge information



Croup is caused by a viral infection of the throat mainly affecting the voicebox and windpipe. It is common in babies and young children during winter months and normally starts as a common cold. Most cases are mild although it can occasionally be more serious by causing the child to have trouble breathing. Children have small soft windpipes. Croup viruses cause the lining of the windpipe to swell and produce sticky fluid that narrows the passageway and makes it difficult for the child to breathe. This gives the child a hoarse voice, noisy high-pitched breathing and a harsh cough that resembles a seal's "bark". These symptoms are often worse at night or when your child is upset and crying. Croup normally lasts one - seven days, the first two being worst. Some children get croup more than once and it is not preventable. Croup is less problematic in older children as the size and strength of the windpipe improves with age.

What should I do now?

- Your child will have been given a drug called Dexamethasone. This helps to reduce the swelling in the airways to ease breathing. It takes a little while to start working. Antibiotics do not help and are not given because Croup is caused by a virus and antibiotics only kill bacteria.
- Croup can be frightening but please stay calm. If your child becomes scared or upset their symptoms will become worse. Help them relax by reading a book or watching a video.
- Do not smoke cigarettes in the same room or near your child.
- Give them plenty of fluid, little and often, especially if they have a fever.



Patient Information

- A GP or a nurse may have previously advised you to take your child into a steam-filled room, such as a bathroom - we do NOT recommend this. There is no medical proof that it helps. Never put your child near a boiling kettle or bowl of hot water in an attempt to give steam inhalation as this can cause serious burns and scalds.

What medication can I give to my child/adolescent?

Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen (if applicable) to be given for pain.

Paracetamol 4-6 hourly last given at.....

Ibuprofen 6-8 hourly last given at.....

When should I seek medical advice?

Croup is a mild illness but can get worse quickly – seek help if this happens:

- If your child has trouble breathing, goes blue or pale in colour
- If your child becomes floppy or sucks in their breastbone when breathing
- If your child has a high temperature, is restless, dribbles nonstop and refuses to eat/drink

For further advice/information:

- Call NHS 111 (24 hours a day)
- Contact your GP

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6934 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

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