

Croup

Information for parents



Specialist Support

If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Health Information Centre Tel: (023) 9228 6757, who will advise you.



What is Croup?

Croup is caused by a viral infection of the voice box and upper airway. This makes the airway narrower making it harder to breathe.

Croup often begins with a cold. However it can occur with no warning and is usually worse at night. Croup usually affects children under six years old and some children will have croup multiple times.

What are the signs and symptoms of croup?

- Harsh Bark like cough
- May have noisy breathing called stridor
- Your child may have a temperature.
- They may sound hoarse due to inflammation of the vocal chords

With more serious croup children can find it difficult to breathe. They breathe faster and their chest wall will suck in with each breath.

Croup symptoms are usually mild enough for a child to stay at home. However, 1 in 10 children need to be admitted to hospital until their symptoms improve.

Care at home

Please do:

- Keep your child calm – children's breathing can get worse if they get upset or disturbed
- Encourage them to drink small amounts of cool fluid to help keep them hydrated and to keep airways moist
- Stay with your child, or check them regularly to ensure symptoms are not getting worse
- Sit near an open window as cool moist air may help loosen mucus and soothe the airways

Can I give my child painkillers?

If your child has a temperature or is unwell then you can give Paracetamol or Ibuprofen.

Ibuprofen acts as an anti-inflammatory which will help reduce swelling in the airways, this can be given as directed on the bottle unless your child's doctor has advised against it.

What should I not do?

Please do not :

- Distress your child as this can make symptoms worse
- Put anything in your child's mouth
- Give cough medicines as they dry the mucus in the airways and have no benefit

When should I seek further medical assistance?

- If your child has a temperature above 39°C
- If your child has breathing difficulties
- If your child is increasingly agitated
- If your child's skin appears pale, grey or blue in colour
- If the skin around the ribs and chest appears to be pulled in and tight making the bones of the chest visible

What treatments are given in hospital?

- Steroids (for example dexamethasone) – your child may need to take steroids. Steroids will help reduce the swelling in your child's airway and help them to breathe more easily.
- Oxygen – your child's oxygen levels will be monitored, using a small saturation probe that clips onto their toe or finger. If they need more oxygen then it will be given through a mask or nasal prongs
- Medicines to reduce body temperature – if your child has a temperature and feels unwell or miserable a nurse may give them Paracetamol or Ibuprofen.

Keeping your child calm and quiet, in combination with these treatments usually leads to recovery. It is very rare for croup to be so severe that the airway becomes too swollen for a child to breathe properly on their own. If this happens, the doctors will explain further treatment options with you.

When can my child go home?

Your child will be discharged when medical staff are happy that your child is over the worst of the illness. Most croup cases will resolve within 2-3 days. However, some mild symptoms may remain for up to two weeks. You can continue to give paracetamol and Ibuprofen at home to make your child comfortable if necessary.

If you become worried about your child when you return home you can:

- If you have been given Open Access use the number provided on your discharge letter to call for advice
- See your GP
- Call 111 for advice
- Go to your local Emergency Department

Consent - What does this mean?

Before any health professional examines or treats you they must have **your consent or permission**. Consent may be implied (e.g. offering a wrist for taking a pulse) or written (where you sign a form agreeing the treatment/operation).

Young people are presumed to be able to give consent depending on their maturity and the nature of the decision. Where a child is not competent to give consent, only a person (or body) with parental responsibility may consent on the child's behalf. More detailed information is available www.dh.gov.uk

Information we hold about you and your rights under the Data Protection Act

Please refer to the booklet 'Your Healthcare Information – Your Rights! Our Responsibilities!' for further guidance.

How to comment on your treatment

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer your questions. However, if you have any concerns you can also contact the Patient Experience Service on 0800 917 6039 or E-mail patientexperience@porthosp.nhs.uk