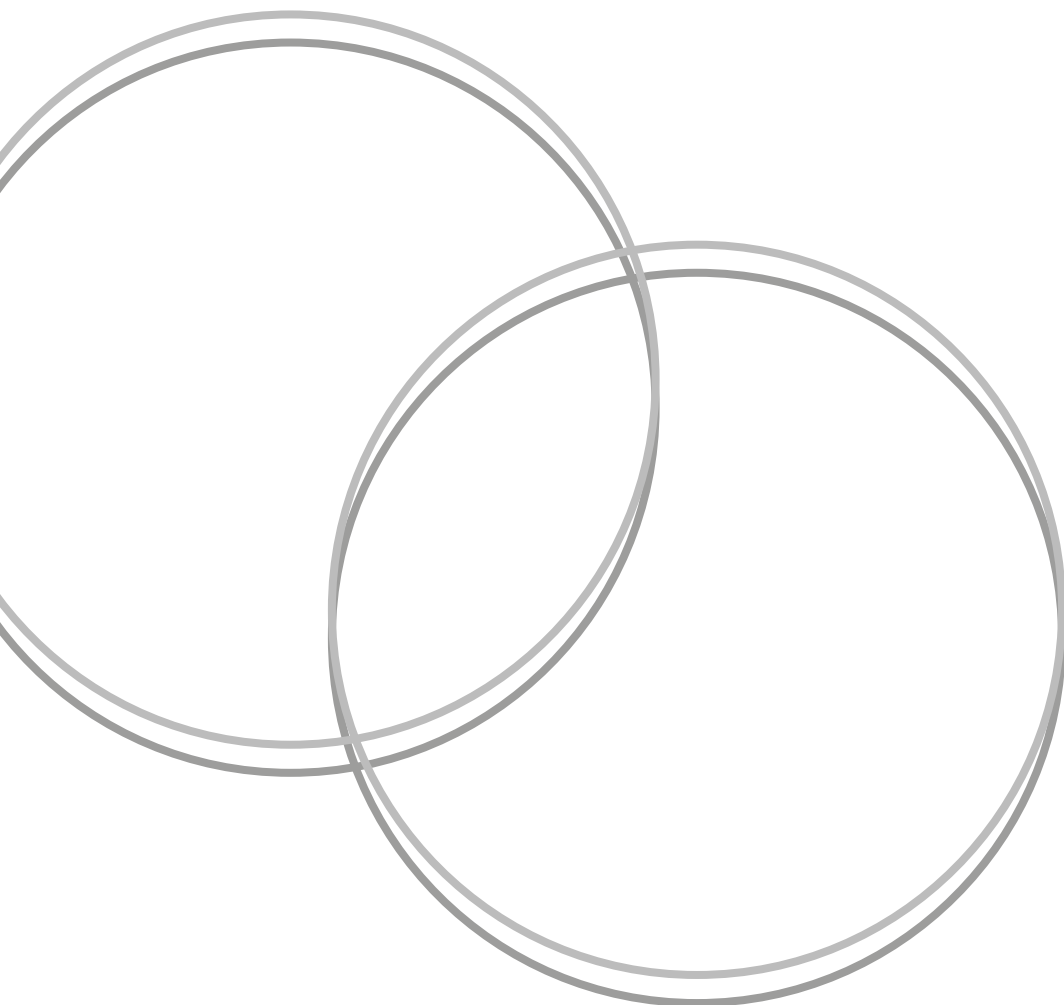




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Croup Advice

Information for parents and carers



What is croup?

Croup is a common childhood illness affecting the airways. It is caused by a viral infection which leads to swelling of the larynx (voice box), trachea (windpipe) and bronchi (large airways).

Your child may have a harsh, barking cough and difficulty breathing, which can be scary for you and your child. Mild croup can often be managed at home, but more severe cases may need to be seen in hospital.

Croup is common in young children from around the age of six months to three years, but can be seen in older ages. Croup does become less common after the age of six years.

What are the symptoms?

Cough:

A harsh barking cough, due to the inflammation of the vocal cords.

Breathing symptoms:

Breathing becomes noisy (usually sounding like a seal bark) due to the inflammation and mucus in the airway. As the airways become narrowed by the inflammation, your child may find it more difficult to breathe.

Other symptoms:

Runny nose, hoarse voice, sore throat, fever and loss of appetite.

Symptoms are often worse at night and may be worse after 1 to 3 days of illness and then improve; however the cough may persist longer.

Some children may have more than one episode of croup.

How serious is croup?

Croup is often fairly mild, but can sometimes be severe. On average, 1 in 10 children are admitted to a hospital for further observations, but most are usually able to return home within 24 hours.

Treatments

Croup is caused by a virus, so antibiotics are not usually given. Steroid medicine called dexamethasone or prednisolone is usually prescribed for more severe cases of croup. This helps to reduce the swelling of the airways and can make breathing easier. This is normally a one off dose but can be repeated after 12 hours if required.

What do I do if my child has croup?

- Remain calm and try to keep your child calm, as crying can make their cough and symptoms worse. They may be more comfortable staying upright.
- Give your child paracetamol and/or ibuprofen to help with symptoms.
- Give your child regular cold drinks, which will be soothing for their throat.
- **Do NOT give antihistamines or cough medicines to your child.** This can make them drowsy and dry the mucous, making symptoms worse.
- Cool air may help: some people find carrying their child upright for a short walk outside can help.

Some people may advise the use of steam; however this is not something we recommended. There is no evidence that this is effective and there may be a risk of scalding your child.

Seek medical help from your GP, out of hour's service or the NHS 111 helpline if your child's condition gets worse, for example:

- they have rapid breathing
- the effort they are using to breathe increases
- their muscles in their chest and neck pull in when they breathe
- their nostrils flare when they breathe
- they are pale and lethargic (floppy or more tired than normal)
- they have a high temperature above 38.5°C

If your child has any one of the symptoms below - CALL 999

- **blue lips**
- **unresponsive**
- **struggling to breathe**
- **drooling or not able to swallow.**

Useful numbers

For out of hours GP service or advice ring **NHS 111**.

Always dial 999 for an ambulance in an Emergency.

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
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