

# Croup

## Patient information

**You have been given this information leaflet because your child has been diagnosed with croup.**

Croup is a viral infection that affects the windpipe (trachea), the airways to the lungs (the bronchi) and the voice box (larynx). It may develop after your child has had a cold. It commonly affects children between the ages of 6 months and 3 years old, it is uncommon after the age of 6 years old.

## Signs of Croup

- Barking cough like a seal.
- A hoarse voice.
- Difficulty with breathing.
- Noisy harsh sound when breathing in, called stridor.
- Cold-like symptoms i.e. high temperature, runny nose, sore throat.

## Caring for your child with Croup

- Croup can usually be diagnosed by your GP and treated at home.
- Keep your child as comfortable as possible, be calm and reassuring. Croup may be distressing to a small child, crying may make breathing more difficult.
- Increase the amount of drinks your child has.
- If breast fed, continue to do so.
- If your child has a temperature or sore throat, you can give paracetamol and/or ibuprofen. Please check the medication label prior to giving to your child.

## Treating Croup

Mild croup may not need any specific treatment other than oral fluids and paracetamol for a temperature.

Croup with noisy or difficult breathing is often given a steroid medication, called dexamethasone. Only one dose is usually required. This will help reduce swelling in the airway, and reduce symptoms.

**Steam should not be used; this may lead to scalding your child.**

**Croup usually lasts 1-3 days, but may leave a mild cough for 1-2 weeks.**

Emergency Department  
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**Seek immediate medical advice if any of the following occur:**

- Severe breathing difficulties
- Blue skin or lips
- Unusually sleepy
- Drooling and unable to swallow
- A recurrence of symptoms the next evening

## Treating Pain

If needed, painkiller options include the following:

**Paracetamol** is usually recommended for painful sprains or strains.

**Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)** relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling. You can buy some types (eg, ibuprofen) at pharmacies, without a prescription either topically as a cream, or as tablets. You should check the medication advice leaflet to ensure you are safe to take these i.e some patients with asthma or stomach ulcers may not be able to.

If this does not help, you may need an additional stronger painkiller – such as codeine – you should discuss this with your pharmacist or GP.

## Further Information

For further advice and information about your condition:

Please choose from the following:

- 'NHS Patient Choices' website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- 'Making Lives Better' patient website: [www.patient.info](http://www.patient.info)
- Telephone NHS 111
- Contact your General Practitioner

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