Emergency Services

# Croup

## What is Croup?

Croup is an infection of the throat, vocal cords, and windpipe. Croup is caused by a virus. The swelling narrows the upper airway, changing your child's voice and making it hard to breathe. While very scary, very few children become really sick and need to stay in the hospital.

Like many cold and flu viruses, croup is more common in the fall and winter.

Croup is a common breathing problem in children 6 months to 4 years of age. Young children eventually grow out of the tendency to get croup.

## Croup spreads easily

The virus that causes croup easily spreads to others, especially during the first few days of the illness. The virus is passed to other people through sneezing and coughing, like a cold.

Adults and older children can become infected with the same virus. However, because they have larger airways, the illness seems more like a simple cold.

To prevent the spread:

- Keep your child home from day care or school until the fever is gone and the barky cough is going away.

- Keep your child with croup away from young babies (under 2 months old) as much as you can.

## When to get help

**Go to the nearest Emergency Department if:**

☐ Your child is constantly breathing faster than usual.

☐ Your child is very tired because they are working hard to breathe.

☐ You can hear a wheezing sound as your child breathes.

☐ Your child's noisy breathing does not clear up after 15 minutes of being out in the cool air.

**Call 9-1-1 right away if:**

☐ The skin around your child's neck and between or under your child's ribs is 'sucking in' as your child breathes in.

☐ Your child is struggling to breathe in and you cannot calm them within a few minutes.

☐ Your child's lips or fingers turn blue or purple.

☐ Your child is unusually sleepy or unusually fussy and restless.

☐ Your child has trouble swallowing or is drooling.

www.fraserhealth.ca

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

Catalogue # 262057 (June 2015)
To order: patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca

Page 1 of 2

## How to take care of your child at home

Because this infection is caused by a virus, your child does not need antibiotics.

Most children can easily be cared for at home. They do not need any special medical treatment.

Children usually get better within 2 to 5 days. The barking cough and noisy breathing are usually worse during the first 2 or 3 days and often worse at night.

Here are ways to help your child feel better:

- Stay close to your child for the first 2 to 3 days until the barking and noisy breathing go away. Watch for signs your child is getting worse (see 'When to get help').

- Give your child cold juice, popsicles, or crushed ice. Cold fluids help soothe a sore throat. Your child also needs fluids to replace the fluid lost from the fever.

- For a sore throat or a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F), give medicine to reduce the fever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol or store brand) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, or store brand). If you are not sure how much to give, talk to your pharmacist.

- Cool air can help with the barking and noisy breathing. If the weather is cool, wrap your child warmly and go outside for 10 to 15 minutes.

- Do not smoke or let others smoke around your child. Smoke irritates the child's lungs.

- Talk to your family doctor before giving any cough or cold medicines.

## To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor

- Fraser Health Virtual Care
  1-800-314-0999 or live chat online at
  fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare
  10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., daily

- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at
  HealthLinkBC.ca

www.fraserhealth.ca

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

Catalogue # 262057 (June 2015)
To order: patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca

Page 2 of 2