

# Croup

## Causes

Croup in children is caused by the same viruses that cause colds in adults. Because several viruses cause croup, a child can get croup several times in his life. These viruses cause swelling of the voice box and vocal cords (the larynx) which gives the child a unique “barky” cough. Croup is spread through hand to hand contact or contact with objects an infected child played with.

## Symptoms

The barking or seal-like cough is the most important clue to croup. This unique cough is typically worse at bedtime or during the first half of the night. Other typical symptoms include a hoarse voice, sore throat, runny nose, lose of appetite, and fever. Many children will also get “stridor”, a noisy gasping sound on breathing in. The worst of the illness usually lasts for three nights, but the runny nose and wet cough can go on for 7-10 days.

## Treatment

Your child should go to the nearest Emergency Room for any of the following: difficulty swallowing, drooling (unable to swallow saliva), severe sucking in of the chest with breathing, or bluish color to the lips.

Two treatments seem to work best for croup: **cold air** and **moisture**. If croup takes place in the winter, bundle your child in warm clothes and sit outside with him for 10-15 minutes. Breathing the cold air seems to relieve the airway swelling. Alternatively, you can open the window and sit him by it. Inhaling cool mist is also helpful. You can use a cool mist vaporizer or you can steam up the bathroom by running the shower. If you use a steam vaporizer, be careful that it is out of reach of infants and toddlers.

Antibiotics are of no help in viral croup. Occasionally, steroids by mouth may be used to help a child with croup. Over-the-counter medicines can help relieve some symptoms associated with croup (like fever or runny nose) but will not help the barky cough.

Call the office if your child has any of the following symptoms:

- Fever persisting beyond 3-4 days.
- Wheezing or shortness of breath.
- Rapid breathing even when their temperature is normal.
- Earaches.