

Care of a child with Croup

Your child has been treated for croup. If your child has had croup once, it may reoccur with a cough or cold, although the symptoms usually get less severe after age four or five.

What is croup?

Croup is an inflammation of the voice box and wind pipe. The medical term is laryngotracheobronchitis. It often starts suddenly and lasts for approximately five days.

It is usually caused by a virus so it cannot be treated by antibiotics.

It is spread by droplets in the air following coughing or sneezing or it can be spread on someone's hands.

Symptoms are often worse at night. They may reach their worst by the third day but a mild irritating cough may last for a further week or two.

If the symptoms do not appear to be improving, you should seek advice from your doctor.

What are the signs of croup?

- Rough barking cough which may sound like a seal. This croupy noise is due to inflammation of the vocal cords.
- Hoarseness or noisy breathing. This is caused by thick mucous in the wind-pipe causing it to become narrow and thus producing the typical noisy breathing called stridor.
- Fever or other general cold or flu like symptoms.

More serious signs

- Noisy breathing (stridor) both in and out.
- Rapid breathing.
- Difficulty breathing.
- The child becomes increasingly tired from the effort of breathing.
- In-drawing between or below the ribs or at the throat when breathing.
- Restlessness and lots of saliva.
- May be unable to swallow.
- Pale face or blueness around the mouth, nose or nails.
- Temperature that does not respond to Paracetamol or Ibuprofen.

What can parents do at home?

- Calm the child if possible as crying may make the inflammation worse.
- Keep calm yourself to avoid alarming your child.
- Sitting your child up may help him/her to breathe more easily.
- Take your child to an open window/door. Breathing in six to 10 breaths of cold air may sometimes help.

You could try using steam which is an older remedy and sometimes works. Take your child in the bathroom. Close the windows and doors and run the hot tap. Stay with your child for

- 10 minutes letting him breathe in the warm steam. Never leave your child alone as the water can get very hot and cause scalds.
- Encourage plenty of oral fluids.
- If child has a temperature, reduce clothing and use Paracetamol or Ibuprofen.

Should I call the doctor?

If your child has had croup like this before and you feel confident, you may not need or wish to call the doctor as mild croup will usually settle down on its own in 24 to 48 hours.

You must call the doctor or ambulance if you notice:

- Your child's skin becoming blue, pale, cold or clammy or if their lips or fingernails turn blue.
- Your child appearing to be losing consciousness.
- Your child seeming to be very sick or if you are worried.

Should my child be admitted to hospital?

Most cases are mild and children recover at home but occasionally they may need a brief period in hospital where they may be given steroid medicine either orally, or if they vomit, via a nebuliser.

These treatments are usually very effective and your child should be discharged within a few hours.

In rare cases, the child may need help to breathe (on a ventilator) until the inflammation and stridor settles down.

Open access

Your child has been seen on either Kipling Ward, Kipling SSPAU, Friston SSPAU or the Emergency Department.

We are happy for you to take your child home but we know it may take a few days before he/she gets better.

If your child's condition gets worse or does not start to get better within the next 24 hours, please telephone for advice on:

Conquest Hospital - Kipling Ward - Tel: (01424) 758039.

Eastbourne District General Hospital - Friston SSPAU - Tel: (01323) 414946.

If unable to contact any of the above phone NHS 111.

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: (01323) 417400 Ext: 5860 or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 01424 755255 Ext: 2620

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Caroline Stephenson, Practice Educator

Liz Vaughan, Matron Friston SSPAU Ward

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Responsible clinician: Dr Geeta Gopalakrishnan, Consultant Paediatrician

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