



## Information for patients, relatives and carers

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### Croup

Croup is an inflammation of the voice box characterised by a typical dry barking cough and sometimes leading to difficulty in breathing.

The condition most often affects small children and it usually starts with a mild fever and a runny nose. This progresses to a sore throat and a typical barking cough.

Young children have smaller air passages and inflammation in the voice box leads to the gap between the vocal cords being narrowed. This may cause noisy breathing which often starts in the middle of the night.

Croup develops over a period of one to two days, the severity and time that it persists varies, but often symptoms are worse on the second night of the cough.

Croup is caused by a virus and for that reason antibiotics are not helpful. Your GP may advise a dose of steroids to help. Croup usually gets better on its own within 48 hours.

#### **How to look after your child with croup at home:**




##### **Do:**

- ✓ Be calming and reassuring. A small child may become distressed with Croup. Crying can make things worse
- ✓ Sit your child upright on your lap if their breathing is noisy or difficult. Let the child find a comfortable position.
- ✓ Give the child lots of cool drinks (if they are happy to take them).
- ✓ A cool environment such as taking your child outside at night for a brief period may help.
- ✓ Lower the fever. If your child has a high temperature (fever) their breathing is often faster, and they may be more agitated and appear more unwell. To lower a fever, give your child paracetamol and/or ibuprofen.

## Do Not:

- × Put your child in a steamy room or get them to inhale steam. There is little evidence that this helps, and some children have been scalded whilst being treated for croup
- × Give them cough or cold medicines
- × Make a child with breathing difficulties lie down or drink fluids if they don't want to, this can make their breathing worse.

Below is a traffic light system for croup to help guide action you may need to take:

 <p>Red</p>	<p>If the child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has blue lips</li><li>• Is unresponsive and very irritable</li><li>• Is finding it difficult to breathe with heaving of chest</li><li>• Pauses in breathing or irregular breathing</li></ul>	<p><b>You need urgent help</b></p> <p>Please phone 999 or go to the nearest A&amp;E</p>
 <p>Amber</p>	<p>If the child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is not improving with treatment</li><li>• Is breathing noisily at rest</li><li>• Has laboured breathing (chest in-drawing)</li><li>• Has a persistent fever over 39°C</li></ul>	<p>You need to contact your GP or nurse <b>today</b> or call NHS 111</p>
 <p>Green</p>	<p>If none of the above features are present</p>	<p><b>Self-Care</b></p> <p>Using advice in this leaflet you can provide the care a child needs at home.</p>

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**Leaflets in alternative languages or formats:** If you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print, Easy Read or audio, please ask the staff who are looking after you.

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