

700 Children's Drive
Columbus, Ohio 43205-2696
nationwidechildrens.org

CROUP

Croup is an illness that is usually caused by a virus. It causes the tissues that line the windpipe (trachea) to become red and swollen below the voice box (larynx). This swelling blocks the flow of air into the lungs.

Croup may come on suddenly in the night or during the day. It usually lasts 5 to 6 days and is more severe at night. Croup occurs most often in the fall of the year. It usually affects children 6 months to 3 years of age. Croup is very contagious (catching) until after the fever is gone. A child who has croup once may get it again. There is no medicine that will get rid of the virus, but you can do some things to help your child breathe easier until the infection goes away. It will help to know ahead of time what to do and to **stay calm** if croup develops.

WHAT YOU WILL HEAR AND SEE

Your child will have trouble breathing. Breathing will be noisy, especially when he or she breathes in. His cough sounds like a seal's bark and gets worse over several days. His voice may sound hoarse or muffled. When he breathes in, you may hear a "crowing" sound.

The hollow in your child's neck may "pull in." His chest may "pull in" when he breathes in. He may look frightened and be restless, upset, and excited. His face will be pale at first and then may get blue or dusky in color. **If your child's face turns blue, call 911 or the emergency squad.**



WHAT TO DO

1. **Stay calm and try to keep your child calm.**
2. Run a cool mist vaporizer in your child's room when he is sleeping. Open the window a little to cool the air.
3. If breathing becomes more noisy and difficult, place your child directly in front of the vaporizer so that he can breathe in the mist. Or, if you don't have a cool mist vaporizer, take your child into the bathroom and shut the door. Turn on the shower and hot water faucets **to make steam**. Be careful to keep away from the hot water. Stay with your child and let him breathe in the steam. **Do not leave your child alone.**
4. If the steam does not seem to help your child, dress your child warmly and take him into the cool night air. The cool air will help to decrease the swelling in the windpipe if the weather is not hot and humid. If the outside air is not cool, open the refrigerator or freezer and let your child breathe in the cool air.
5. When breathing is easier for your child – after 10 to 15 minutes - give him sips of water. Later, give more clear, warm liquids to drink such as warm apple juice, lemonade or herbal tea. Warm liquids help to relax the vocal chords and loosen sticky mucus. Drinking plenty of liquids is very important in helping your child get over croup.
6. Take your child's underarm temperature (see page 2).

Picture 1 Stay with your child and let him breathe in the steam.

HOW TO TAKE AN UNDERARM TEMPERATURE

The normal axillary (underarm) temperature is 97.6°F. To take this temperature:

1. Use a thermometer with a long bulb.
2. Make sure the child's underarm space is dry.
3. Place the thermometer under the child's arm (Picture 2).
4. Keep your child's arm close to his body to help keep the thermometer in place.
5. Stay with your child and hold the thermometer in place for 10 minutes.
6. Remove the thermometer and read it.



Picture 2 Taking an axillary temperature.

MEDICINE

Croup can cause your child's temperature to go very high – up to 104° F.

If your child's temperature is about 102° F, give this medicine

_____ (Medicine)

_____ (Amount)

_____ (How often)

IF YOUR CHILD WAS TREATED IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM

If your child was treated in the Emergency Room and the symptoms of croup occur again at home, follow the instructions in **WHAT TO DO** on page 1.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

Call your child's doctor (phone) _____ if:

- Your child does not improve after being in a steamy bathroom for 10 to 15 minutes (or after you have taken your child out into the cold night air).
- Breathing becomes more difficult (chest continues to "pull in").
- Drooling
- Trouble swallowing; suddenly refusing to drink liquids.
- Blue coloring around your child's mouth.
- Fever over 102°F (axillary) for more than 3 days.
- Croup last more than 10 days.

If you have any questions, please call your doctor.