



Croup

Croup is a common viral infection of the upper airway. It can occur year round, but is more common in winter and spring. In younger children it causes the sudden onset of a barking cough and noisy breathing. In older children it may result in a dry cough and hoarse voice. Croup is always worse at night.

Cause: Croup is caused by a viral infection that causes inflammation of the upper airways.

Symptoms: The classic symptoms are fever and a barky cough. Fever to 103 or 104 degrees is not uncommon with croup. Sore throat and hoarse voice or cry are common in croup. Other viral symptoms such as a runny nose or fine rash are often seen in croup.

Treatment: Since croup is a viral infection, antibiotics are of no benefit and not prescribed. A short course of steroids by mouth or a single steroid injection in the office can dramatically improve symptoms and reduce the severity of disease.

Cool mist humidifiers at night can also help reduce symptoms. For an acute attack of croup humidified air will help your child. You can use a nebulizer if you have one, steam up a bathroom, or walk outside in the humid air. Most children will improve with 5-10 minutes of breathing humidified air.

Tylenol (acetaminophen) and Motrin (ibuprofen) may be used to control the fever and pain. Do not use aspirin in children under 18 years of age.

Follow up: If your child is doing well no follow up is necessary. You should follow up immediately if your child develops any of the following:

- Fever above 104 degrees not responding to medication
- No improvement after two days of medication
- Neck stiffness, neck pain, or headache
- Signs of dehydration (dry mouth, lethargy, sunken eyes, decreased urine)
- Difficulty swallowing, talking or breathing
- Increased drooling
- Rapid, labored, noisy breathing
- Worsening symptoms

Please note: These guidelines are not meant to diagnose any condition, or treat any condition not diagnosed by a physician. They are provided for general information only. If you are concerned about your child's condition, call a physician or 911 immediately.