

## **FACTS ABOUT CROUP**

### **What is croup?**

Croup is a respiratory condition that affects the upper airway and voice box of children. It occurs most commonly in the late fall and early winter.

### **What causes croup?**

Viruses in the upper respiratory system cause inflammation and associated symptoms of croup.

### **What are the symptoms of croup?**

Children with croup develop a barking cough, hoarseness, and sometimes a fever and runny nose. The child may be mildly or severely short of breath. The cough and difficulty breathing are caused by swelling and inflammation of the upper airway. With severe croup, there may be a high-pitched or squeaking noise when breathing. Symptoms last five to six days and are generally worse at night.

### **How is croup spread?**

The viruses that cause croup are generally spread by direct contact with a sick individual or by touching surfaces infected with the viruses and then touching the mouth or nose.

### **Who is at risk for croup?**

Children ages six months to five years are most at risk for croup. It is more common in boys than girls. Children born prematurely or children with asthma are more prone to developing croup.

### **How is croup diagnosed?**

Croup is often diagnosed by a physical examination. In severe cases, an x-ray may be taken to rule out choking on a small item or other conditions.

### **How is croup treated?**

Placing the child in a humid environment, such as a steamy bathroom for 20 minutes, is the general treatment for croup. It may be helpful to take the child outside into cool air to decrease swelling in the throat. Fever reducing medication, such as acetaminophen, may be given if the child has a fever. **DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN TO A CHILD WITH FEVER**, as this has been associated with Reye Syndrome. The child may also be monitored for severe symptoms such as bluish color, drooling, trouble swallowing or talking, and irritability. Get immediate care if these symptoms occur.

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### **How is the spread of croup reduced?**

1. Infection can be prevented through handwashing, especially after sneezing, coughing or nose wiping.
2. Dispose of facial tissues properly and teach children to cover their mouth when they cough or sneeze.
3. Cleaning and sanitizing toys or other objects children put into their mouths can also limit the spread to others. Use a sanitizing solution of 1/4 teaspoon of bleach per quart of cool water.

### **Exclude from group setting?**

Exclusion from child care or school may be recommended if the child has a fever and doesn't feel well enough to participate in normal activities.

## ***Handwashing***

Handwashing is one of the primary ways to stop the spread of croup. The following steps are recommended for good handwashing:

1. Turn on warm water.
2. Apply soap to hands.
3. Rub soap over tops and palms of hands and around fingernails. Scrub hands for approximately 20 seconds.
4. Rinse hands with running water.
5. Dry hands with a clean, disposable towel.
6. Repeat the process if preparing foods.

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