

**You are being provided with this fact sheet:**

- because you or your child may have been exposed to croup.** If you believe your child has developed croup, contact your health care provider. Notify your child care provider or preschool if a diagnosis of croup is made.
  - for informational purposes only.**
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**What is croup?**

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

**What causes croup?**

Croup is usually caused by a viral infection of the upper respiratory system. The parainfluenza virus is the most common cause of croup. Sometimes croup can occur for other reasons, such as an allergy, asthma, or other conditions that irritate the upper respiratory system.

**What are the symptoms of croup?**

Croup often begins like a typical cold. Children with croup develop a barking cough, hoarseness, and sometimes a fever\* and runny nose. Shortness of breath may be mild to severe. 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 are often worse at night.

**How is croup spread?**

The viruses that cause croup are generally spread by direct contact with the secretions of a sick individual or by touching surfaces infected with the virus and then touching the mouth or nose. It is also possible to become infected by breathing in contaminated droplets from a sick person's sneeze or cough. A person can become sick 2-7 days after being exposed to the virus.

**Who is at risk for croup?**

Children ages three months to five years are most at risk for croup.

**How is croup treated?**

There is little treatment for croup, other than reassurance and comforting the child. Keeping the child calm will help him or her to breathe more easily. Fever-reducing medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, may be given if the child has a fever and is older than 6 months. *Never give aspirin to a child*, as this has been associated with Reye Syndrome.

Croup is an emergency if the child is bluish in color, has high-pitched breathing (called "stridor") at rest, cannot speak, is struggling to breathe, or has difficulty swallowing saliva. **If these symptoms occur, call 911 and seek immediate medical assistance.**

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### **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. Laboratory tests can also be performed to test for human parainfluenza virus.

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

- Handwashing, especially after sneezing, coughing or nose wiping.
- Teach children to cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve or a tissue, not their hands. Dispose of facial tissues properly and wash hands after throwing it away.
- Cleaning and sanitizing toys or other objects children put into their mouths can limit the spread to others.

### **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.

\* Fever is defined as a temperature above 101°F (38.3°C) by any method or above 100.4°F (38.0°C) for infants younger than 2 months old.

### **References:**

*American Academy of Pediatrics:* [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

- Croup and Your Young Child <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/Croup-Treatment.aspx>. Accessed December 2020.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Website)*

- Human Parainfluenza Viruses. Accessed December 2020.

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### **Child Care Health Outreach Program**

3020 Rucker Avenue, Suite 104 ■ Everett, WA 98201-3900 ■ [www.snohd.org](http://www.snohd.org) ■ tel: 425.252.5415