



Croup

Croup is a narrowing or swelling of the larynx (voice box) due to a viral infection. Because it is due to a virus, antibiotics do not cure the croup. It occurs most commonly between the ages of 1 and 4 years and is usually accompanied by signs of an upper respiratory infection (runny nose, cough or fever). The cough is harsh and sounds like a “barking seal”. The voice or cry can be hoarse. The **ways to manage a croup attack** are:

- encourage your child to drink plenty of clear liquids
- treat your child’s fever with acetaminophen or ibuprofen as directed by your physician
- use a cool mist humidifier or vaporizer in your child’s room
- if at rest you child starts to make louder noises when breathing in (this is called “stridor”), try the following measures:
 - take your child into the bathroom and close the door
 - turn on the hot water in the shower or the tub and let the room fill up with steam
 - sit with your child in the steam-filled bathroom for 10-15 minutes
 - or, in colder weather you may bundle your child in warm clothes and take your child outside to breathe in the cold air for 10-15 minutes

If your child continues to have stridorous breathing at rest after attempting either of the above, call your physician immediately. Your child may need evaluation in the office or emergency department right away.

Other signs of increased breathing difficulty that necessitate an **immediate** physician call or emergency room visit are:

- wheezing or high-pitched “whistling” sounds with breathing
- breathing that becomes unusually fast for your child
- drooling and inability to swallow fluids
- inability to talk or a weak cry
- restlessness associated with trying to find a more comfortable position that makes it easier to breathe
- blue lips or face
- limpness, gasping breaths, or a very sick appearing child regardless of the degree of breathing