

# Patient Education



## Croup Follow-up Instructions

### What is croup?

Croup is a common illness, especially in children younger than three years of age. It can last up to a week and occurs most often in the fall or early winter.

### Causes of croup

- Croup is caused by a viral infection of the upper part of the airways. Unfortunately, none of the vaccines your child has received protect them against croup.
- The illness is mildly contagious and there is no way to prevent it.
- This type of viral infection often causes the airways to become narrow, making it hard to breathe.

### What to expect

- Your child may wake up crying in the middle of the night with a cough that sounds like a seal barking. These symptoms are usually better in the day time.
- Parents should expect about three sleepless nights and should prepare to have help at home or switch off from the rest of the world.

### Try to control croup

These simple measures control croup well enough in most children; however, sometimes they are not enough

- When the child is crying and coughing, try to take your child outside for a little while – Fifteen minutes in the cool night air often relieves the problem by reducing swelling of the upper airways.
- Encourage your child to drink as much as he/she wants.
- Treat fever of more than 38°C with a dose of acetaminophen (Tylenol or Tempra). The pharmacy can help you calculate the proper dosage.
- Use a cold water vaporizer or humidifier in your child's bedroom.

### Next steps

- If your child has any breathing trouble that concerns you, seek medical attention. Your child may need to be seen in a doctor's office or the local Emergency Department. **If the croup is more severe, the child may need a breathing treatment that delivers a special drug to the narrowed areas of the airway to reduce swelling.**
- Rarely, children have to be hospitalized with croup, but if they do their stay is usually brief and they rapidly improve.

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