



Pediatric Clinic
PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS
CROUP

WHAT IS CROUP?

Croup is an infection causing a partial blockage of air as it flows through the larynx (voice box). The noise can be very frightening, and your child's cough may sound like a seal barking. When your child breathes in you may hear a harsh, rasping sound, which we call stridor. His voice may be hoarse, too.

Croup may appear after your child has had "a cold" for several days. Croup is usually caused by a virus, and may last several days. Sometimes croup comes on suddenly in the middle of the night. It may even disappear in a few hours. It may occur more than one time in a child's life.

WHAT YOU WILL SEE:

- The hollow (area beneath the adam's apple) in the child's neck may "pull in."
- His chest may "pull in" when he breathes in.
- His face will be pale.
- He will look "frightened."

This happens because your child cannot move air in and out of his lungs easily.

STAY CALM:

Croup is frightening to the child and parents. A crying, upset child tends to make the croup worse. Parents can help to relieve croup by being calm themselves, which helps to quiet the child. This relieves the tightness around the larynx and allows the child to breathe more easily.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:

1. Stay calm.
2. Take your child into the bathroom and shut the door. Turn on the shower and hot water faucets to make steam. Be careful to keep away from the hot water (Picture 1). Cool mist will work, too, and may be safer. If the mist seems to upset the child, then stop and calm the child. You may also take the child outside to breathe in cool night air.
3. Sit with the child and let him breathe in the steam.
4. Do not leave the child alone.
5. Have someone start a vaporizer in the child's room.
6. When breathing is easier (10-15 minutes), give him a popsicle. Later give the child more clear fluids to drink. This will help to keep the throat and airway moist.

WHEN TO CALL THE EMERGENCY ROOM (526-7111) OR TAKE YOUR CHILD TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM:

1. If your child's breathing does not improve after trying the home treatments for 15-20 minutes
2. If his breathing problem gets worse
3. If he begins to drool
4. If he has trouble swallowing
5. If he becomes restless and cannot sleep
6. If a bluish color is seen around his lips

Your observations of your child are important. Tell the doctor what you have seen and what you have done. This information will help the doctor care for your child.

FOOD AND REST:

1. Avoid milk and thick liquids. These will make your child's phlegm thicker and make him/her cough more.
2. Play activities such as coloring and looking at books together will help him stay calm and quiet so he may breathe more easily.

If you have any questions, please call the Nurse Care Line (1-888-887-411) or the Pediatric Clinic (526-7653).