

# CROUP

Croup is a viral infection that causes swelling in the throat, particularly the larynx or "voice box" area. The swelling leads to a barky cough (often described as sounding like a seal) and a type of noisy breathing, called stridor, heard mainly when the child breathes in. The noisy breathing will occur only with crying or agitation in mild cases, but may be constant in more severe cases. A child with croup may also have a runny nose and fever.

Croup often comes on or gets worse at night or during naps, and a child with croup may wake up in the middle of the night with a fit of barky coughing or noisy breathing and may be quite upset. Often, the croup will seem better during the day, only to get worse again during the next night. Croup can last for several days.

## Treatments for Croup

- When your child has croup, you can do the following things to help at nighttime:
  1. Run a **cool-mist humidifier** in your child's bedroom and keep the bedroom temperature cool;
  2. Try to have your child **sleep with his/her head elevated**, for example in a car seat, on your lap, or, if old enough, on a few pillows;
  3. Give acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil or Motrin) for fever or sore throat pain.
- If your child wakes up in the middle of the night with an episode of croup, you can try one or both of the following things to help her breathing immediately:
  1. Take her into the bathroom, close the door and turn the shower on the hottest setting to let the bathroom steam up; sit in the **steamy bathroom** with your child for 15 to 20 minutes;
  2. If it is cold outside, wrap your child in a warm blanket and step outside with her in the **cold outside air** for about 10 minutes or take a ride in the car with the windows down and the heat off.
- In more severe cases of croup, the doctor may prescribe a steroid medication to help reduce the swelling in your child's throat.

### **Please call the office IMMEDIATELY for:**

- Trouble breathing that doesn't improve rapidly with home treatment
- Trouble breathing and blue or gray color of the child's skin
- Noisy breathing even when the child is quiet and restful
- Excessive drooling or trouble swallowing saliva
- Too breathless to speak or make normal baby sounds