

Croup

This leaflet offers more information about croup. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your child's care.

What is croup?

Croup is an infection caused by a virus, often the parainfluenza virus. It causes swelling of the trachea (windpipe) and larynx (voice box).

Croup is common between the age of six months and six years. Many children will have two or more episodes of croup in their childhood. Children over six years old can be affected by the same virus but the virus is unlikely to cause croup as their windpipe is wider and stronger.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Barking cough
- Noisy breathing (stridor) – especially when your child breathes in
- Fever
- Runny nose
- Aches and pains
- Sore throat
- Symptoms often worse at night.

Does my child need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

No. Croup is diagnosed by the story you tell the doctors and the classic sounding cough.

What treatments are available?

Some children with croup will need a steroid medicine. This medicine helps reduce the swelling of the voice box and windpipe which reduces difficulty in breathing. The steroid does not make the length of illness any shorter.

Some children need a nebuliser of medicine (adrenaline) which quickly reduces swelling but the medicine stops working after a couple of hours. Children who need this nebuliser must stay in hospital.

What happens if my child does not get treatment?

The majority of children will get better on their own without any treatment. You should always see a doctor if your child:

- Has noisy breathing when they are not upset
- Breathing is getting faster
- Is restless or agitated
- Has a constant fever.

Call an ambulance if your child:

- **Is struggling to breathe.**
- **Is blue.**
- **Is very sleepy.**
- **Is dribbling and unable to swallow.**



Is there anything I can do to help my child?

- Stay calm and reassure your child as they may become upset and scared with croup. Crying can make your child's symptoms worse.
- Sit your child upright on your lap if the breathing is noisy or difficult.
- Reduce fever. If your child has a temperature you can give them a dose of paracetamol or ibuprofen. You must follow carefully the instructions that come with the medicine.

What doesn't help?

- Don't make your child lie down if they have difficulty breathing and don't want to.
- Don't make your child drink if they are dribbling and can't swallow.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer). **Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

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