

- Breathing becomes difficult
- Severe abdominal pain develops
- Sore throat pain is so severe that the child is unable to eat or drink
- Respiratory stridor is observed

Croup Syndromes

Croup is a general term applied to a symptom complex characterized by hoarseness, a resonant cough described as “barking” or “brassy” (croupy), varying degrees of inspiratory stridor, and varying degrees of respiratory distress resulting from swelling or obstruction in the region of the larynx and subglottic airway. Acute infections of the larynx are important in infants and small children because of their increased incidence in these age groups and because the small diameter of the airway in infants and children places them at risk for significant narrowing with inflammation.

Croup syndromes can affect the larynx, trachea, and bronchi. However, laryngeal involvement often dominates the clinical picture because of the severe effects on the voice and breathing. Croup syndromes are described according to the primary anatomic area affected (i.e., epiglottitis [or supraglottitis], laryngitis, laryngotracheobronchitis [LTB], and tracheitis). In general, LTB occurs in very young children, and epiglottitis is more common in older children. A comparison of croup syndromes is provided in [Table 21-1](#).

TABLE 21-1
Comparison of Croup Syndromes

	Acute Epiglottitis	Acute Laryngotracheobronchitis	Acute Spasmodic Laryngitis	Acute Tracheitis
Age group affected	2 to 5 years old but varies	Infant or child younger than 5 years old	1 to 3 years old	1 month old to 6 years old
Etiologic agent	Bacterial	Viral	Viral with allergic component	Viral or bacterial with allergic component