

# Croup in babies and children

Croup is an inflammation of the airways. It's common in children under the age of 3. Croup is caused by a viral infection of the voice box (larynx) and windpipe (trachea).

## Symptoms

Croup usually develops over a few days. It can be worse at night.

Symptoms include:

- a barking cough that sounds like a seal
- loud or rasping breathing
- hoarseness - your child's voice may be low and rough
- fever
- aches and pains
- runny nose
- runny eyes

## Treatment

Always contact your GP or [out-of-hours GP service](#) if you think your child has croup. The symptoms of croup are usually mild, but they can change and become worse quickly. Sometimes children with croup need to be treated in the hospital.

**Go to your nearest emergency department (ED) or call 112 or 999 if your child:**

- is struggling to breathe - you may see the chest or neck muscles being pulled in with each breath
- has grey or blue skin or lips
- has croup symptoms and is now drooling and unable to swallow
- is unusually quiet and still, or unusually sleepy

Children with croup usually get better on their own after 2 days.

Until then, you can help your child at home by:

- staying calm - if your child becomes stressed it may be harder for them to breathe
- reassuring and comforting them
- keeping them upright and not letting them lie down when possible
- giving them plenty of fluids, such as water or their regular milk feeds
- trying to rest when you can - croup is often worse at night meaning that parents can have a few nights of disturbed sleep

Give your child medicine such as liquid paracetamol if they are uncomfortable with a fever or pain. Speak to your pharmacist for advice and always read the label.

## Don't

- ✗ do not give your child any medicines that have not been advised by your GP, hospital doctor, pharmacist or PHN
- ✗ do not put your child in a hot room
- ✗ do not let your child inhale steam

Page last reviewed: 14 December 2022

Next review due: 14 December 2025

This project has received funding from the Government of Ireland's Sláintecare Integration Fund 2019 under Grant Agreement Number 123.

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