

[Request appointment](#)[Log in](#)[Diseases & Conditions](#)

# Croup

[Request an appointment](#)[Symptoms & causes](#)[Diagnosis & treatment](#)

On this page

[Diagnosis ↓](#)[Treatment ↓](#)[Self care ↓](#)[Preparing for your appointment ↓](#)

## Diagnosis

Croup is usually diagnosed by a health care provider. The provider:

- Observes your child's breathing.
- Listens to your child's chest with a stethoscope.
- Examines your child's throat.

Sometimes X-rays or other tests are used to rule out other possible illnesses.

## More Information

[Close](#)

Advertisement

Advertisement

---

## Treatment

Most children with croup can be treated at home. Still, croup can be scary, especially if your child needs a visit to the health care provider's office, emergency room or hospital. Treatment is usually based on how severe the symptoms are.

### Comfort measures

It's important to comfort and calm your child because crying and distress can worsen airway swelling, making it harder to breathe. Hold your child, sing lullabies or read quiet stories. Offer a favorite blanket or toy. Speak in a soothing voice.

Also, make sure that your child drinks plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.

### Medicines

Your child's health care provider may prescribe these medicines:

- **Corticosteroid.** A corticosteroid — such as dexamethasone — may be given to reduce swelling in the airway. Symptoms will usually start to improve within a few hours. Your child may take pills over several days. Or your child may get a single dose of dexamethasone as a shot because of its long-lasting effects.
- **Epinephrine.** Epinephrine is effective in reducing airway swelling with more-severe symptoms. The medicine may be given in an inhaled form using a nebulizer. It's fast acting, but its effects wear off quickly. Your child likely will need to be observed in the emergency room for several hours to see if a second dose is needed before going home.

### A stay in the hospital

Close

Advertisement

Request an appointment

## From Mayo Clinic to your inbox

Sign up for free and stay up to date on research advancements, health tips, current health topics, and expertise on managing health. [Click here for an email preview.](#)

Email \*

Subscribe!

[Learn more about Mayo Clinic's use of data.](#) ▼

## Self care

Croup often runs its course within 3 to 5 days. In the meantime, keep your child comfortable with a few simple measures:

- **Stay calm.** Comfort or distract your child — cuddle, read a book or play a quiet game. Crying makes breathing more difficult.
- **Provide humidified or cool air.** Although there's no evidence of benefit from these practices, many parents believe that humid air or cool air helps a child's breathing. For moist air, you can use a humidifier. You can also sit with the child in a bathroom filled with steam created by running hot water from the tub.

Advertisement

Close

- **Hold your child in a comfortable upright position.** Hold your child on your lap, or place your child in a favorite chair or infant seat. Sitting upright may make breathing easier.
- **Offer fluids.** For babies, breast milk or formula is fine. For older children, soup or frozen fruit pops may be soothing.
- **Encourage rest.** Sleep can help your child fight the infection.
- **Try a fever reducer.** For treatment of fever or pain, consider giving your child infants' or children's over-the-counter fever and pain medicines such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others) as a safer alternative to aspirin. Read the directions carefully for dosing. Ask your health care provider about the right dose if you're not sure.

Use caution when giving aspirin to children or teenagers. Though aspirin is approved for use in children older than age 3, children and teenagers recovering from chickenpox or flu-like symptoms should never take aspirin. This is because aspirin has been linked to Reye's syndrome, a rare but potentially life-threatening condition, in such children.

- **Skip the cold medicines.** Cold preparations available without a prescription aren't recommended for children of any age. And they can be harmful in children under than 2 years old. Plus, nonprescription cough medicines won't help croup.

Your child's cough may improve during the day, but don't be surprised if it returns at night. You may want to sleep near your child or even in the same room so that you can take quick action if symptoms worsen.

---

## Preparing for your appointment

Advertisement

Close

should call your provider.

## What you can do

Before your appointment, make a list of:

- **Your child's symptoms**, including how long they have been occurring and what, if anything, makes them better or worse.
- **Any medicine your child is taking**, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs and other supplements, and their doses.
- **Questions to ask your child's health care provider.**

## What to expect from your doctor

Your child's health care provider will likely ask a number of questions to help determine the best course of treatment:

- What are your child's symptoms?
- Has your child had a fever or difficulty swallowing?
- How long has your child been experiencing symptoms?
- Has your child's cough become worse over time? If so, how rapidly?
- Have you noticed a pattern to your child's cough? For instance, does it get worse at night?
- Has your child had croup in the past?
- Has your child recently been exposed to other sick children?
- Does your child have any other medical conditions?
- Are your child's vaccinations up to date?

Your health care provider will ask other questions based on your answers and your child's symptoms and needs. Preparing and anticipating questions will help you [Close](#)

Advertisement