

Dr. Glasser's Croup Handout

Croup is caused by many different viruses in the cold virus family. It has the usual cold symptoms like runny/stuffy nose, sore throat, fever, but the symptoms particular to croup are hoarse voice and seal or dog bark dry cough which gives way to a deep wet bronchitis cough after a few days.

The barking cough is usually at night or early morning and is uncommon in kids over 3 yrs old. The hoarse voice and barking cough come from inflammation in the vocal cords and windpipe respectively, and finally the wet cough from inflammation and increased mucus production in the upper bronchi (bronchitis).

In younger kids and babies who have smaller airways, the inflammation results in a narrowing of the airway that can sometimes lead to noise even with breathing in. Many people mistake this for wheezing which is a whistly sound when breathing out. The harsh honking sound when breathing in is called stridor and it means that the croup is severe. In this situation, going out into the cold night air or "steaming" the baby in the bathroom with the shower running hot and a closed door for about 10-20 minutes will usually break the stridor and the "croup" or barking cough that comes with it. If it doesn't or the child appears very labored with breathing, you should proceed directly to the Emergency Room at St. Rose Siena, Sunrise, Summerlin or UMC. **You do not need to call if the child has labored breathing or has stridor that doesn't respond to the above interventions, just go straight to the ER.**

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Because croup is a viral infection, antibiotics are of no value. The usual course is nasal symptoms from 7-14 days, fever (if any) no more than 96 hrs or 4 days, barking cough for about 2-3 nights, hoarse voice for 2-7 days depending on if the child rests his voice, wet cough for about 10 days. The total time with cough and nasal symptoms may be as long as 2 weeks. Since the viruses that cause croup can trigger asthma symptoms in people who have a tendency toward reactive airways or asthma, get the breathing treatments going early in the course of illness.

Anyone with cold symptoms for longer than 2 weeks should be seen again or for the first time. For more information go to www.kidshealth.org and search for croup.

Call 248-7337 for appointments.

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