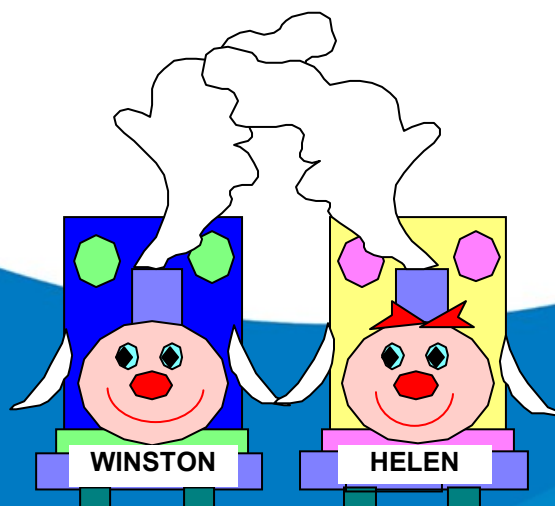


# Croup

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## The nature of the condition

Croup is when the voice box (Larynx) swells, usually due to a viral infection. This causes narrowing of the windpipe and reduces the amount of air to the lungs, so the child will find it harder to breathe. This can be very frightening both to the child and parents.

Croup is a common childhood illness and in most children, it is a mild disease, although it can be very worrying for parents and distressing for the child. It is common in young children between the ages of 6 months and 3 years and is uncommon after the age of 6 years.

There is a hoarse 'barking' cough and the child may find breathing very difficult. When the child breathes in, the narrowed windpipe makes a seal-like noise. Other symptoms may include a runny nose, hoarseness and a sore throat. They may also have a temperature.

The child may often refuse food and in some cases, fluids. Croup is often worse at night time. Your child may be scared, restless and crying. All these can make things worse. Regular paracetamol and plenty of hugs may help your child.

Symptoms are often mild but sometimes may become severe. Always consult medical advice if you have any concerns about your child but definitely seek medical help if their breathing symptoms get worse, your child is restless or agitated or if they are unusually pale.

**If your child's lips appear blue (cyanosed), if they are unusually sleepy or struggling to breathe or they are drooling or unable to swallow, you should dial 999 and ask for emergency services at once.**

Children with croup usually have a family member with, or recovering from, a common cold or chest infection. Why some children only catch a cold and others get croup is not known.

Croup can happen again but children do not suffer any long-term effects and there is no evidence that croup leads to asthma. Recurrent croup however may need further investigation.

In severe cases oxygen may be given with a steroid medicine given in the form of a mist (nebulised). Croup usually clears up without any problem in 3-4 days. However, the coughing may last some time longer, perhaps getting worse at night when the child is lying down.

## Our usual form of treatment

Mild croup can be treated at home.

Try to keep your child calm and be reassuring. Paracetamol or ibuprofen can be used if your child has a temperature. Offer small and frequent amounts of fluid for your child to drink. Steam is **not** recommended any more as there is little evidence to support its benefit and some children have been scalded as a result.

More severe croup is treated in hospital with a steroid medicine such as **Dexamethasone**. This may help your child to breathe more easily. Doctors may insert a drip into one of your child's veins to make sure your child gets enough fluids if they are not taking enough fluids orally. It is important to maintain hydration of your child in illness.

## The benefits of treatment

Croup usually clears up without any problem in 3-4 days. However, the coughing may last for some time longer, perhaps getting worse at night when the child is lying down.

## The risks of treatment

The drugs used to treat croup have been shown to be well tolerated. There are few risks involved in the treatment of croup.

## Discomforts of treatment

Your child may not like taking the medicine or having an oxygen mask on their face, they may become distressed. However, the treatment will make them feel more comfortable and they will be reassured, which will help them to stay calm.

If a drip is needed they may feel a sharp scratch, but in some cases a numbing cream or freeze spray can be put on the skin prior to insertion of the drip to stop them feeling any discomfort.

## Additional forms of treatment

In all cases of croup, and in addition to any medical treatment, it always helps to be calm and reassuring with your child. Sitting your child upright on your lap in a darkened room and talking quietly to the child may also help.

If your child feels hot you can give paracetamol or ibuprofen following the instructions of the dose on the bottle.

## Consequences of not treating croup

- Severe breathing problems.
- Lack of oxygen.
- Blocking of the windpipe, which is life threatening.
- The child's condition may deteriorate. This may involve more invasive treatment to be needed.

If you have any further questions, please contact your child's consultant via their secretary via the hospital switchboard. The secretaries are available Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm

If you need to contact the department outside of these hours, please phone either:

Ward 3F      0151 430 1616

Ward 4F      0151 430 1791

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Warrington Road,  
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