

Suburban Pediatrics, Inc.

456 N. New Ballas Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63141
(314) 567-6868
Exchange (314) 362-4402

4217 Bayless Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63123
(314) 638-7330
Exchange (314) 362-4402

Croup

What is croup? Croup is a common illness in young children usually caused by a virus that affects the voice box (larynx.) Most children will get croup once or twice in their lifetime, although some can get croup whenever they have a respiratory illness. It usually affects children between the ages of 6 months to 3 years of age. While it can occur at any time of year, it is most common during the winter. Fortunately most cases of croup are mild and resolve within 5 to 7 days.

Symptoms include:

- Tight “barky” cough that sounds like a barking seal or dog
- Hoarse voice or cry
- Cold symptoms such as runny nose and congestion
- Usually a low-grade fever, but temperature can rise up to 104
- Harsh, raspy sound heard with breathing called “stridor”

How is it treated? If your child awakens in the middle of the night with croup, take her or him to the bathroom and run a hot shower. Sitting with your child in the steamy bathroom for 15-20 minutes may help her breathe easier, although the cough may persist. Running a humidifier while she sleeps may also be helpful. This steam treatment almost always works but if it doesn’t, take your child outside for a few minutes. Often breathing the cool, moist night air helps your child’s breathing.

Antibiotics will not treat viral croup. If symptoms persist or increase, your child should be examined as on occasion, a steroid medication may be prescribed by your pediatrician to reduce swelling in the airway. Over-the-counter cough medications are not recommended as there is no proven benefit for children. In fact the ability to cough and clear the airway of mucus is very important and protects the lungs from pneumonia. Giving your child warm fluids to drink can relax the airway and loosen up the phlegm.

Please call our office for an appointment if:

- Your child refuses to drink
- The croup worsens after treatment
- The croupy cough persists after 14 days
- You have other concerns or questions

Call for Emergency Services (911) if your child :

- Is struggling to breathe or looks blue
- Cannot speak or make verbal sounds for lack of breath
- Has stridor at rest
- Drools or cannot swallow saliva