

## Croup

- Croup is a viral infection mostly affecting younger children under the age of 5 years. It causes swelling of the voice box & vocal cords (larynx) and windpipe (trachea). This swelling makes the airway narrower, which is why your child has the typical **barking, seal-like cough** and **hoarse, croaky voice**. They may also have a **raised temperature** and their breathing may be affected.
- Croup may begin without warning and you may first notice it when your child suddenly sits up in bed with a barking cough. More often it begins as a cold with runny nose & cough before starting with the harsh barking cough.
- The barking cough is often worse at night. Croup usually lasts 5 days and symptoms tend to be at their worst on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> night.

### Most croup is mild and your child can be looked after at home:

- In mild croup your child has a harsh, barking cough, usually worse at night when they may be upset and need comforting. If they are distressed with the cough and have a fever then a dose of paracetamol or ibuprofen can help.
- Try to calm your child by staying with them, sitting them up, and perhaps reading them a story or watching a DVD, as this helps relax their breathing.
- Although the barking cough sounds very distressing and you and your child will not get a lot of sleep for a few nights, the fact that the barking sea cough is **loud** shows that air is easily getting in and out of your child's lungs.
- If your child becomes more **distressed** and **does not want to sleep at all** you may notice that they are **breathing a little faster** or **slightly deeper** than usual. If this is the case see then you should **contact your GP the next day**.

### Seek urgent medical help from your GP, 111 or A&E if your child;

- has to put a lot of effort into breathing to get the air in and out of their lungs. They will look very worried as if concentrating all their energy on getting their breath.
- is not be able to lie down at all without finding it hard to breathe.
- if your child's muscles between their ribs and above their breastbone are sucking in. This is called **recession** and is a sign of a difficulty in breathing.
- if your child is breathing much faster than they normally do.
- if your child has a **stridor** (a harsh high pitched, slightly whooping/squeaking noise when your child takes a breath in). This is a sign that the voice box is becoming more swollen.

### Call 999 to go to A&E if your child;

- cannot speak or cry from lack of breath
- is struggling more to get each breath and/or their lips are blue in colour
- begins drooling excessively and cannot take any fluids
- shows worsening recession (sucking in between ribs) and quieter breathing
- looks very sick and is very pale and drowsy.