

Come back to hospital urgently if your child:

- Has noisy breathing (stridor) which is getting worse or is present at rest
- Is breathing faster than normal or is struggling to breathe - if you notice sucking in at the base of the throat, sinking in of the skin between or below the ribs
- Changes colour - becomes pale or blue
- Is drooling or not able to swallow or feed easily
- Is unusually sleepy or drowsy

## Useful numbers

Practice Plus (Brighton walk-in centre / GP service) 0333 321 0946  
Open every day from 8am to 8pm, including bank holidays.  
[www.practiceplusbrightonstation.nhs.uk](http://www.practiceplusbrightonstation.nhs.uk)

For out of hours GP service or advice ring NHS 111

Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital  
01273 696955 Ext. 2593  
Children's Emergency Department

Please be aware that CED staff will not be able to give you medical advice over the telephone.

**Always dial 999 for an ambulance in an emergency**



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## Croup

Children's Emergency Department

## What is croup?

Croup is a common childhood illness affecting the airways. It is caused by a viral infection, and leads to swelling of the larynx (voice box), trachea (windpipe) and bronchi (large airways).

Your child may have a harsh, barking cough, and difficulty breathing, which can be scary for you and your child. Mild croup can often be managed at home, but more severe cases may need to be seen in hospital.

## Who does it affect?

Croup is common in young children from the ages of around 6 months to three years, and is uncommon after the age of six.

## What are the symptoms of croup?

Your child may have:

- **Cough:** usually barking and harsh sounding
- **Breathing problems:** croup can cause the breathing tubes to become narrow and cause noisy breathing (called stridor)

- **Other symptoms:** these include runny nose, hoarse voice, sore throat, fever and loss of appetite.

Symptoms are often worse at night, and may be worse after 1-3 days of illness and then improve; however the cough may persist longer.

Some children will have more than one episode of croup.

## How is croup treated in hospital?

**You child may be given steroid medication:** this can help to reduce the swelling in the airway to make breathing easier.

If your child needs further treatment they may need a nebuliser (to breathe medication in as a mist) or may need to stay in hospital for observation.

Croup is caused by a virus so antibiotics are not usually given.

## How can I treat croup at home?

Stay calm and keep your child comfortable - they may be more comfortable staying upright.

Encourage your child to have small, regular cool drinks.

**Cool air may help:** some people find carrying the child upright for a short walk outside can help.

If your child has a high temperature, keep them in cool, loose clothing.

Give your child paracetamol or ibuprofen if they are uncomfortable or in pain (follow the dose instructions on the bottle).

## What shouldn't I do?

**Do NOT give cough medicines:** this can make your child drowsy and dry the mucous, making symptoms worse

**Steam therapy is no longer recommended:** research has shown this to be of little benefit.