



4171 Westport Road
Louisville, KY 40207

6112 Crestwood Station
Crestwood, KY 40014

(502)896-8868

www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com

Croup

What is Croup?

Croup is caused by swelling of the voice box (larynx) and windpipe (trachea) and causes these areas to become narrowed and makes a child's breathing noisy and difficult. The cough caused by croup has a very distinctive "seal barking" sound. Croup affects children most often between the ages of 3 months and 6 years of age. As a child gets older, croup is not as common because the airways get larger so that swelling is less likely to hinder breathing. Croup can occur any time of the year, but is most common during the fall and winter. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/Winter-Safety.aspx>

Types of Croup

Viral Croup

Viruses are the most common reason for croup. It usually begins by looking like a cold, but then the cough begins to sound barky. The child may look frightened because the ability to breathe is more difficult. A child's voice may become hoarse and their breathing will become noisier. The fever that accompanies the virus may be low-grade or may be elevated to 104°F. Croup does have a tendency to get worse at night and may be a little better during the day. The barky cough usually gets worse on the second and third night and starts to improve by the fourth night. The other cold symptoms such as runny nose, congestion and cough (non-barky) will likely continue for another 5-7 days.

Occasionally the child may also make a coarse musical sound each time they breathe in called stridor. This usually means that the upper airways are very swollen and the child is having more difficulty breathing. Stridor usually worsens when the child is active or crying, but if the child is having stridor at rest, it can be a sign that the croup is more serious.

Spasmodic Croup

This type of croup is caused most often by allergies or changes in weather. It can also be scary because it can start suddenly in the middle of the night. The child will have the characteristic barky cough and possible stridor, but will not have a fever. This type of croup can recur, but often responds to allergy medications and/or the home treatments used for viral croup. This type of croup may recur into late childhood or adolescence.



4171 Westport Road
Louisville, KY 40207

6112 Crestwood Station
Crestwood, KY 40014

(502)896-8868

www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com

What is the home treatment if my child has croup?

If your child wakes up in the middle of the night with croup, here are some things that will make them feel more comfortable:

- ✓ Stay calm! Croup sounds and looks scary and the more scared a child becomes, the worse the symptoms will become.
- ✓ Immediately take the child into a steamy bathroom and sit for 10-20 minutes. Read books, sing to the child, and try to calm and comfort them. The steam from the bathroom may help to break up the sticky mucus blocking the upper airway. If the child has another attack that night, repeat the steamy bathroom treatment.
- ✓ Cold air also may help croup symptoms. Place a clean cool mist humidifier directly at the child while sleeping at night or napping. This cool air helps to reduce the swelling in the upper airways.
- ✓ If the steamy bathroom helps some, but not enough, bundle the child and take them outside for 10-15 minutes if it is cool outside. Breathing in the moist, cool night air may help the child breathe easier.
- ✓ You can help control a child's temperature with acetaminophen or ibuprofen (only use ibuprofen if the child is older than 6 mos of age). Follow the dosing recommended for the baby's age and weight. A fever sheet with recommended dosing can be found on our website: www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com.



4171 Westport Road
Louisville, KY 40207

6112 Crestwood Station
Crestwood, KY 40014

(502)896-8868

www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com

***** If despite the above home treatments, your child does not improve, please call the office immediately for further advice.***

If the child is not breathing better after the above treatments are given, our office or the emergency department may give the child a breathing treatment with a very specific medicine called racemic epinephrine to decrease the swelling in the upper airway. An oral steroid may also be prescribed to help this as well.

Antibiotics are not helpful in the treatment of croup because they treat bacteria, not viruses. Croup is most often caused by a viral illness.

How can I prevent my baby from getting croup?

Make sure that everyone washes their hand before touching your baby and keep your child away from anyone who has symptoms of a cold or croup. Remember that you should **never** expose your child to tobacco smoke, especially when they are sick.

Viral croup is very contagious and is spread by saliva and respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing. Your child is considered contagious until the fever has been gone for 24 hours or at least until 3 days into the illness.

When to call the office:

Immediately if:

- ✓ Breathing becomes difficult, even when the child is not coughing
- ✓ The child starts drooling or spitting or starts having difficulty swallowing
- ✓ The warm mist fails to improve the stridor in 20 minutes
- ✓ Your child starts acting very sick
- ✓ During office hours if:



4171 Westport Road
Louisville, KY 40207

6112 Crestwood Station
Crestwood, KY 40014

(502)896-8868

www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com

- The fever lasts longer than 5 days
- Croup lasts longer than 10 days

The treatment plan for your baby includes all of the above recommendations, as well as:

_____ .If you have any questions,
please call our office.