

# **CROUP (Croupy Cough and Stridor)**

## **SYMPTOMS & CHARACTERISTICS OF CROUPY COUGH**

- ❑ A special cough that occurs with infections of the voice box (larynx)
- ❑ The cough is tight, metallic, and like a barking seal
- ❑ The voice is usually hoarse

## **SYMPTOMS & CHARACTERISTICS OF STRIDOR**

- ❑ A harsh, vibrating sound during inspiration
- ❑ Breathing-in is very difficult
- ❑ Usually only present with crying or coughing
- ❑ As the disease becomes worse, the stridor occurs continuously

**Similar Conditions to Croup ~ WHEEZING:** A high-pitched meowing or whistling sound produced during expiration. If this is what your child has, call your physician immediately.

**Cause ~** Croup is a viral infection of the vocal cords. It is usually part of a cold. The hoarseness is due to swelling of the vocal cords. Stridor occurs as the opening between the vocal cords becomes more narrow.

**Expected Course ~** Croup generally changes to a normal cold after 2 – 3 days and then can last 2 – 3 weeks.

## **FIRST AID FOR ATTACKS OF STRIDOR WITH CROUP**

If your child suddenly develops stridor or tight breathing, do the following:

**Inhalation of Warm Mist ~** Warm, moist air seems to work best to relax the vocal cords and break the stridor. The simplest way to provide this is to have your child breathe through a warm, wet washcloth placed loosely over the nose and mouth. Another good way, if you have a humidifier (not a hot vaporizer), is to fill it with warm water ( a little warmer than body temperature) and have your child put his or her face in the stream of humidity and breathe deeply through an open mouth.

**The Foggy Bathroom ~** In the meantime, have the hot shower running with the bathroom door closed. Once the room is all fogged up, take your child in there for at least 10 minutes. Try to allay fears by cuddling your child and reading a story. Fear and crying make croup worse. If the crying can be stopped, the breathing will be easier. An occasional child will do better if taken outside for 5 minutes. Why the fresh air should break the stridor remains a mystery.

**Result of First Aid ~** Most children settle down with the above treatments and then sleep peacefully through the night. If the stridor continues in your child, call your physician immediately.

## **CALL YOUR PHYSICIAN (AND ALSO BEGIN THE FIRST AID FOR STRIDOR ABOVE)**

### **Immediately if:**

- ❑ Your child is drooling or having great difficulty swallowing.
- ❑ Your child can't bend the neck forward.
- ❑ Your child has passed out. (Also call 911)
- ❑ The stridor is present constantly.

- Breathing is difficult.
- There are any retractions (tugging in) between the ribs.
- The lips are bluish or dusky.
- Your child is constantly uncomfortable.
- Your child has been unable to sleep.
- Coughing spasms occur continuously for over 1 hour.
- A toy or other small foreign object could be caught in the windpipe.
- The croup started suddenly after taking a medicine or being stung by an insect.
- Your child is acting very sick.

**During Office Hours if:**

- Your child is under 1 year old.
- The attacks of stridor are occurring more than 3 times a day.
- The fluid intake is poor.
- A fever (over 104°F) is present.
- You have other questions.

**HOME CARE FOR A CROUPY COUGH**

**Mist** ~ Keep the child's room humidified. Use a cool mist humidifier if you have one. Have it run 24 hours a day. Be sure to empty and wash the container with soap and water every day. Don't add any camphor or menthol oils to the water, because they are irritating to the cough in most children. If you don't own a humidifier, hang wet sheets or towels in your child's room.

**Increase Fluid Intake** ~ Encourage your child to drink more than usual. Clear fluids (ones you can see through) are the best. Warm fluids help relax the vocal cords and may help clear stridor occurring with coughing spells.

**Cough Medicines** ~ Medicines are less helpful than either mist or increased fluid intake. Older children can be given cough drops for the cough, and younger children can be given some corn syrup. Avoid strong cough medicines (i.e. those with codeine) which could suppress the brain's respiratory center and interfere with keeping the lungs clear. If your child has a fever (over 102°F) you may give him acetaminophen.

**Close Observation** ~ While your child is croupy, sleep in the same room temporarily. Croup can be a dangerous disease. By all means, don't let anyone smoke around your child; smoke can make croup worse.

**CALL YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICIAN IMMEDIATELY IF:**

- Breathing becomes difficult.
- The lips turn bluish.
- Your child is drooling or having great difficulty swallowing.
- Your child is unable to sleep because of the croup.
- The warm mist fails to clear the stridor in 20 minutes.
- You feel your child is getting worse.

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## **CROUP AND THE USE OF DEXAMETHASONE**

You have been given a prescription for dexamethasone. The pills are 4mg in strength.

If your child weighs:	20-30 pounds:	1 1/2 pills
	30-40 pounds:	2 pills
	Over 40 pounds:	3 pills

The pills stay in most children's system for 2-3 days.

Crush the pills between 2 metal spoons into a fine white powder. The powder is bitter tasting and must be hidden in apple sauce, ice cream, etc., but NOT in a liquid like orange juice.

Your prescription contains extra pills because many children who develop croup to have other bouts of croup with colds, allergies and even weather changes.

If you go out of town, you need to take your prescription with you because the office will not call out this medicine if the office is closed.

This medicine should not be given unless your child has a significant barky (dry) cough. It will NOT help cure the common cold!