Severe croup

- Severe breathing difficulties
- The centre of the chest is sucking in with each breath
- Drooling
- They’re too breathless to feed or talk
- You can’t hear sounds of breathing
- Worsening stridor
- Distress or agitation
- Abnormal drowsiness and sleepiness
- Dark, blue-tinged or pale skin
- A rapid heartbeat or a falling heart rate
- 0.25% of children

**ACTION**

**Go the Emergency Department immediately**

**Phone 999 for an ambulance**

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.info@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

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What should I do?

**Croup cough**
- Bark like cough
- A hoarse or croaky voice.

**ACTION**
- Treat at home with simple treatments
- Ask pharmacy for advice if needed.
- Do not give cough syrups as these can make your child drowsy and mask the symptoms of the airway narrowing

**Mild croup**
- Stridor when the child cries or coughs
- Stridor which is continuous.
- The child is **NOT** working harder to breath.

**ACTION**
- Ask for an appointment with your GP or, if it is the middle of the night, the GP out of hours service via 111.

**Moderate Croup**
- The stridor is continuous
- You notice the child is working harder to breath
- Less than 5% of children

**ACTION**

Seek immediate medical attention either with your GP or go the Emergency Department

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### Croup

**Who gets croup?**

Croup is common between the ages of 1 and 3 years of age. As children become older their breathing tubes become bigger and firmer so they are not as easily affected. Croup is uncommon after the age of 6.

**What are the symptoms of croup?**

Symptoms are often fairly mild. Most children will have a sore throat, runny nose and a temperature. They will also have a bark like cough and a hoarse or croaky voice. Sometimes croup may become more severe and children may develop stridor.

**What is Stridor?**

Stridor is a noise that can occur as a child breathes. It is usually a harsh grating sound. Sometimes it may be a soft sound. The voice box (larynx), and windpipe (trachea), connect the mouth to the top of the lungs. Infections in this area can cause a narrowing of the tubes which creates the breathing noise.

Stridor is most noticeable when the child cries, coughs or is distressed. Symptoms tend to be worse at night.

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### What causes stridor?

The commonest cause is a viral infection causing croup. Other causes are bacterial infections of the voice box or windpipe.

**In Hospital**

Some children with stridor will be given a medication called dexamethasone which helps reduce the swelling of the windpipe.

**Simple treatments**

- Cold drinks in small frequent amounts to keep your child hydrated.
- Cold air e.g. outside
- Pain relief
- Avoid activity as this may make symptoms worse
- Steaming makes no difference and every year children sustain scalds from steam burns

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### How to spot if your child is working harder than normal to breathe

- Sucking motion between the ribs with breathing.
- Using their tummy to breathe more than usual.
- Sucking in of the neck with breathing.
- Centre of the chest sucking in with each breath- **this is a sign of severe difficulty.**