

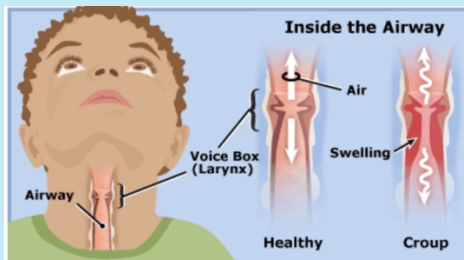
October Newsletter

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Croup

Croup is a common illness in young children under the age of 6 and occurs most commonly in children from 6 months to 3 years of age. Typically, croup occurs in response to a virus that causes inflammation of the larynx and subglottic airway (the area between the vocal cords and the trachea). This causes a narrowing of the airway and leads to stridor (a harsh vibrating noise) when kids breathe in, and also leads to a characteristic “barky” cough. Although croup is usually benign and self-limiting, in rare cases it can be so severe that it causes respiratory distress or airway obstruction.



What viruses cause croup?

Croup is most commonly caused by a group of viruses called the Parainfluenza viruses. In spite of some similarities to influenza, these viruses cannot be prevented with the influenza vaccine and typically have less severe symptoms than influenza.

Croup can also be caused by RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus. In recent years, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (Covid-19) has posed another potential cause of croup: Covid-19. Specifically, the Omicron variant can cause croup in children.

How is croup treated?

Croup typically starts with upper respiratory symptoms from a viral infection and then progresses when the child develops stridor and a barky cough. Croup symptoms last an average of 3 days from the onset of symptoms. Children with symptoms of croup should always be evaluated by a healthcare provider. To reduce the airway inflammation associated with croup, a short-term oral steroid is often prescribed.

This reduces the child's symptoms and also reduces the risk of severe respiratory distress associated with croup.

How can croup be prevented?

The best way to prevent croup is to prevent the upper respiratory infection that causes it. Coughing, sneezing, and touching affected surfaces are the most common ways that the seasonal viruses that cause croup are spread. Good hand hygiene, covering coughs, and avoiding contact with other sick people are important to reduce the risk of croup.



Sources:

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