

## Croup:



**Symptoms:** Croup is an illness characterized by a high-pitched, barky, or seal-like cough. It can be caused by a number of different viruses, but is commonly caused in late summer and early fall by parainfluenza virus. The high-pitched cough of croup is caused by inflammation of the upper respiratory tract (the airway from the neck up to the nose and mouth). In an adult, the same illness may manifest as laryngitis, but in a child, due to their smaller airways, this swelling causes a high-pitched cough (the way air moving through a small tube creates a high-pitched sound).

**Treatment:** Just as in the case of the common cold, antibiotics will not treat croup. Our treatment measures are aimed at decreasing the inflammation of the upper airway. With mild symptoms, such as a barky cough but an otherwise happy child, you may try to reduce the inflammation using a cool mist vaporizer, as well as ibuprofen for comfort. If your child seems to be struggling to breathe, it is important to seek medical attention immediately. Your provider may prescribe steroids which will decrease the inflammation in the upper respiratory tract while the virus takes its course. You may notice that your child's symptoms seem to worsen when they are crying or agitated. For this reason, it is important to try to keep them calm and consoled.

**When to schedule a visit:** As with the common cold, if you are worried that your child is having difficulty breathing, seek immediate medical attention in the emergency room. If you feel that your child's symptoms are worsening, and are uncertain as to whether he or she may benefit from steroids, please make an appointment to see us in the office.

## A note on prevention:



The best way to prevent the spread of these viruses is to wash hands and to cover your mouth or nose with your elbow when coughing and sneezing. Despite these precautions, most of us and our children will weather a few viral infections over the next few months. Remember the importance of supportive measures such as keeping your child hydrated and treating the discomfort with either Tylenol or Ibuprofen (if your child is over six months of age). Fever, while an indicator of illness, is not an emergency (unless your child is under 2 months of age or immunocompromised) and does not in and of itself require a

visit to the doctor or the emergency room. A fever is defined as 100.4 or above, and there is no temperature that by itself requires a visit to the emergency room. High fevers in children often correspond to relatively benign viral illnesses.

Finally, although we have few treatments to eradicate viruses themselves, we do have a vaccine to prevent one of the most common, and one that can cause significant health issues. That is influenza. We recommend that all children six months of age and older receive the flu vaccine. The injection is available to all children over six months of age. The first year a child receives the flu vaccine he or she will require two injections, spaced at least thirty days apart. Your child may receive these vaccines during a well visit, or during one of our flu clinics, the dates of which are on our website. If you have any questions about the vaccine, please do not hesitate to ask one of us. CDC.gov is also a very informative website.