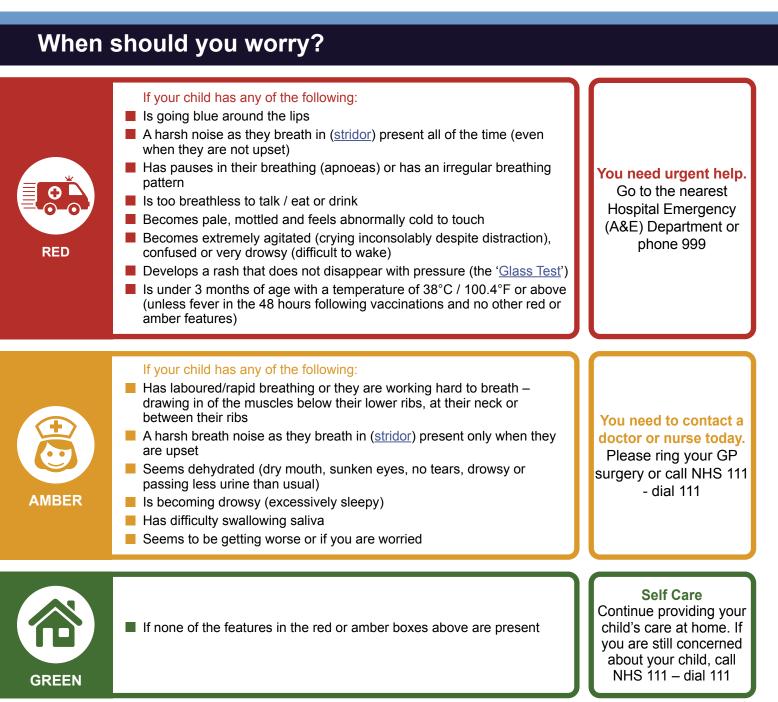
# **Croup - Advice Sheet**

Advice for parents and carers



Croup is a common childhood illness that can cause a distinctive, bark-like cough. It can also cause difficulty breathing which can be frightening for both you and your child.



## What is croup?

Croup (also called laryngotracheobronchitis) can be caused by several viruses which affect the airways including the voice box (larynx), windpipe (trachea) and lungs (the bronchi) causing them to swell and become narrower. It usually affects babies and young children between the ages of one and three years old. Some children have croup two or more times in their childhood.

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### What are the symptoms of croup?

Your child may have:

- A cough the cough is usually harsh and barking. This 'croupy cough' is due to inflammation and swelling of the vocal cords in the voice box (larynx).
- Noisy breathing symptoms the inflammation can narrow the voice box (larynx) and windpipe (trachea) and cause an extra noise called a stridor. This noise is normally heard on breathing in.
- Breathing may become difficult if the narrowing becomes worse.
- Other symptoms these may include a runny nose, hoarseness and a sore throat.
- Croup may follow a cold but can also appear without any earlier illness. Children may also experience a high temperature (fever), general aches and pains and be off of their food.
- The symptoms of croup appear worse at night. They usually peak after one to three days and then improve. A mild but irritating cough may persist for a further week or so.

## How can I help my child?

- Stay calm in order to reassure your child children with croup may become distressed and crying may make their symptoms worse.
- Sit your child upright on your lap if their breathing is noisy or difficult. Let them find the most comfortable position.
- Encourage your child to drink cool drinks regularly (little and often) to help soothe their throat and keep them hydrated.
  Give your child paracetamol or ibuprofen liquid, following the instructions on the bottle.
- If their temperature is high, dress them in cool, loose clothes (if any) and don't use anything warmer than a sheet to cover them in bed.
- Stay with your child, or check him or her regularly, as you need to know if the symptoms are getting worse.
- Some people find that taking their child outside in the cool, fresh air helps to relieve their symptoms.

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