



# MIDDLEBORO PEDIATRICS

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## CROUP INSTRUCTIONS

Croup is usually a viral infection, like a cold, that affects the area around your child's voice box. Just like the lining of your nose becomes "stuffy and swollen" when you have a cold, the vocal cords and the area around them become swollen with croup. Older children and adults develop laryngitis. Younger children develop the typical "barking" cough which sounds like a sea lion barking, and the crowing sound, called stridor, when trying to inhale. These are the result of narrowing of the windpipe around the vocal cords.

Croup generally begins very suddenly, with the child waking up having difficulty breathing. Most children are healthy or have signs of a mild cold just before the croup starts. It can be an extremely frightening experience for both parents and children.

Like most viral illnesses, croup lasts about a week. The first 1 or 2 nights tend to be the most difficult. The cough generally begins to loosen and become more "chesty" after 2 to 4 days. It does tend to be worse at night and improve during the day for reasons which are not clear.

## TREATMENT OF CROUP

As in most viral illnesses, there is no specific treatment to shorten the illness. There are, however, several things you can do to help relieve the symptoms.

1. If your child is having difficulty breathing, take him into the bathroom, shut the door, turn the shower on hot to fill the room with steam, and let him breathe the steam for 10 to 15 minutes.
2. You may also try taking the child outside in the cool night air.
3. Keep the bedroom cool by opening a window slightly.
4. Run a cool mist vaporizer next to the child's bed so the mist goes over his or her face. They will get a bit damp, but this will not harm them, and it is essential that the mist be near their faces. **Do not use a hot steam vaporizer because of the risk of scalding your child.**

## WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

**Please contact us immediately if any of the following occur.**

1. Your child continues to have difficulty breathing and stridor (the crowing sound) while resting comfortably after you have steamed him and/or taken outside for 15 or 20 minutes.
2. The child color becomes blue at any time.
3. You notice progressive difficulty breathing and/or drooling, especially if there is fever and the illness did not start very abruptly.
4. If there are other symptoms disturbing to you, or the child appears "sicker" than you are comfortable handling yourself.