



Croup

(Viral Croup, Laryngotracheobronchitis)

What is croup?

Croup is swelling around the vocal cords and windpipe that causes difficulty breathing and is accompanied by a “barking” cough. One of the most common causes of croup is a virus called parainfluenza.

Who is at risk for croup?

People of all ages are at risk for croup, but it is most common among infants and children between the ages of 3 months and 5 years. Some children are prone to croup and may get it several times. People with asthma and other lung diseases may get severe symptoms of croup.

What are the symptoms of croup?

Croup features a barking cough. Most children have what appears to be a mild cold for several days before the cough becomes evident. This condition is generally much worse at night and often lasts five or six nights, but the first night or two are usually the most severe.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms of croup can appear two to six days after the person is exposed to the virus.

How is croup spread?

Croup is spread person to person when an infected person coughs and sneezes.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

As long as the person is infected with the virus, he or she is able to spread it to other people; however, not everyone who is infected will show symptoms.

How is a person diagnosed?

A doctor may check for the symptoms of croup, such as wheezing and decreased breath sounds. Laboratory tests can also identify the parainfluenza virus.

What is the treatment?

At this time, there is no specific treatment for croup. People with compromised immune systems should contact their health-care provider for possible supportive care. Antibiotics will not work for this illness.

Does past infection make a person immune?

People do not become immune to the virus that causes croup. However, re-infection generally causes a less severe illness.

Should children or others be excluded from child care, school, work or other activities if they have croup?

No. Infants, toddlers and school-age children should not be excluded unless the staff determines the child is unwilling or unable to participate in activities. They also should be excluded if the staff determines that they cannot care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group.

All others can attend work and other functions as long as they are well enough to do so and are able to practice good hand washing and respiratory etiquette.

What can be done to prevent the spread of croup?

Washing your hands frequently, covering your cough and avoiding close contact with those infected with croup are three ways to prevent the spread of this disease.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available at www.ndhealth.gov/disease or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Resource:

American Academy of Pediatrics. [Parainfluenza Infections]. In: Kimberlin DW, Brady MT, Jackson MA, Long SS, eds. *Red Book: 2015 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 30th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2015: 586.