

CROUP

Croup refers to several fairly common respiratory illnesses that affect young children, usually between the ages of 3 months and 3 years, with most illness occurring during the second year of life. Croup occurs year-round depending upon the virus causing the illness.

CAUSE Many different viruses, most commonly parainfluenza virus type 1. Not all persons exposed to the same virus will come down with croup. Since many different viruses can cause the illness, a child may develop croup more than once.

SYMPTOMS Runny nose, sore throat, mild cough, and fever often occur one to several days before the cough starts. Croup is characterized by hoarseness and a deepening, non-productive cough. Rapid breathing, sitting forward in bed to cough, or making a noise when taking a breath may also occur. The child may be better during the day, but gets worse at night. The illness lasts 3 to 4 days, but the cough may last longer. Hospitalization may be required if the illness is severe.

SPREAD By touching the secretions from the nose or mouth of an infected person and/or touching hands, tissues, or other items soiled with these secretions and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

INCUBATION It may take up to 10 days after exposure for early symptoms to develop and several days later for the cough to occur.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD From shortly before symptoms begin and for as long as the acute symptoms last.

EXCLUSION Childcare: Until fever is gone and the child is well enough to participate in routine activities.

DIAGNOSIS Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has a high fever, difficulty swallowing or breathing or persistent sore throat or cough.

TREATMENT Croup is a viral illness; therefore, antibiotics will not be effective.

DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN or SALICYLATE-CONTAINING MEDICATIONS TO ANY CHILD OR ADOLESCENT UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Cover nose and mouth with tissue when coughing and sneezing or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.**
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled. (See pgs 34-36.)

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.