

Croup

Croup is a viral infection that causes a harsh, barking cough and noisy breathing because the voicebox (larynx) and airways are inflamed and swollen. It often starts out like a common cold, with symptoms such as fever and runny nose, but then progresses to a cough that sounds like a seal or a barking dog. It usually affects children aged between 6 months and 3 years old, but can occur in other age groups. It is rare in adults because their airways are larger.

How it spreads

Croup spreads from person to person via droplets containing the virus that causes it. People can be infected by:

- breathing in droplets when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes on them or near them
- touching a surface contaminated with droplets – for example, hands, tissues, toys or eating utensils – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Exclusion period

Exclude based on symptoms; otherwise do not exclude. This means, if a person has respiratory symptoms (cough, sneezing, runny or blocked nose, sore throat), exclude them if:

- the respiratory symptoms are severe, **or**
- the respiratory symptoms are getting worse (more frequent or severe), **or**
- they also have concerning symptoms (fever, rash, tiredness, pain, poor feeding).

A person can often have an ongoing cough after they have recovered from a respiratory infection. If their other symptoms have gone and they feel well, they can return to the service.

Actions for educators and other staff

Follow the exclusion period in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Ensure staff and children have good respiratory and hand hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Actions for parents and carers

Keep your child at home until their symptoms have gone. Try to keep them calm, as breathing is more difficult when they are upset.

Avoid contact between your child and other children, or elderly people, until they feel well again.

Encourage your child to wash their hands regularly. Teach your child to cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue into a bin and wash their hands. If there are no tissues nearby, teach them to cough or sneeze into their inner elbow instead of their hands.

More information about croup

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of croup (healthdirect.gov.au/croup).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.