

Croup

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Communicable Disease Division
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Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We have learned that a child in our care has been diagnosed with croup. We are providing this general information about croup and suggest you consult with your child's healthcare provider if you have further questions or concerns about this condition.

What are the symptoms of a croup?

Croup is caused primarily by a parainfluenza virus. Symptoms include a cough that is tight, low-pitched, and barky (like a barking seal). The voice or cry may be hoarse (laryngitis) and the child may make a harsh, raspy sound when breathing in (stridor). Loud or continuous stridor noises may indicate severe croup. Croup usually lasts 5–6 days and is often worse at night.

How is croup spread?

Similar to colds, croup is easily spread from person-to-person through the air by coughing or sneezing. Surfaces and hands contaminated with nose, mouth, or throat secretions may also spread viruses that cause croup.

How is a croup treated?

Parents should always consult with their child's healthcare provider for treatment recommendations. Home care advice often includes using a humidifier, fever management, observation during sleep, and avoiding tobacco smoke.

How do you control the spread?

Make sure adults and children wash hands frequently and thoroughly. Antibacterial soap is not necessary; use plenty of plain liquid soap and warm water. Teach children to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue or their arm when coughing or sneezing. When using a tissue, wash hands well afterwards. Avoid touching the eyes, mouth, or nose. Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces frequently. Exclusion of children with croup from school and childcare is generally not necessary. However, if the child is too sick to participate in normal activities, they should be kept at home.

How do I get more information?

For more information about the common cold, contact your healthcare provider or Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6410 and press "0".

Reviewed December 2015

This letter is reviewed annually. Go to www.tpchd.org to receive the most up-to-date version.