Croup is an infection that causes swelling below the voice box (larynx). It is usually caused by a virus. When a child with croup coughs, he makes a sound like a dog or seal barking. The child's voice may sound hoarse and his breathing may be loud.

Children who get croup are usually between 18 months and 3 years of age. Coughing caused by croup is mostly heard at night. It may happen for 2 or 3 nights in a row. The coughing can come on suddenly, lasting a few minutes or a few hours.

**Home care:**

1. Remain calm. Calm your child.
2. Moist air can help your child's cough. Dry air makes it worse. Take your child into the bathroom. Run hot water in the sink, tub or shower to make steam. Sit with your child on your lap in the bathroom. Watch him carefully so he doesn't get burned by the hot water. Do not put him in the water. Read or sing to your child to calm him. Take your child back to bed when his coughing and breathing are better.
3. Cool air may stop the coughing. Wrap your child warmly and take him outside to breathe night air for 10 to 15 minutes. During the summer, you may open the freezer or refrigerator door and allow your child to breathe the cool air. Call your child’s doctor if your child is still coughing.
4. While your child has croup, he needs to be watched more closely. You may want to sleep in the same room with him.
5. Having your child swallow warm, clear liquids may help the cough more than medicine. Try warm apple juice, lemonade, Jell-O®, water, or tea. Antibiotics do not help.
6. Smoke makes croup worse. Do not let anyone smoke around your child in the house or in the car.

**Call your child’s doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:**

- Your child's fever is higher than 102° F (38.9° C) or if he develops a high fever suddenly.
- Your child’s breathing or coughing doesn’t get easier in 20 minutes in moist air.
- Your child has retractions (skin tugs between and under ribs during breathing).
- Your child’s cough keeps him from sleeping.
- Your child will not drink fluids and has not had a wet diaper or urinated for 12 hours.

**Go to the nearest emergency room or call 911 if:**

- Your child begins to drool or cannot swallow.
- Your child is having trouble breathing.
- Your child’s lips, skin or fingernails turn blue or white.
- You think your child is getting worse.